HARK FORRARD!

FRED COTTON

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HARK FORRARD!

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BY

FREDERICK COTTON

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'OUR GOLDEN BANNER' 'GONE AWAY' ''WARE WIRE'
ETC.

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Hôtel Mena
Pyramids
Egypt
April 2nd 1891.

Dear Mrs Tessop

So many thanks for your kind letter giving me permission to dedicate this book to you. I only hope that when you have read it you may not think it unworthy of the honour bestowed upon it by yourself.

Sincerely yrs.
Fred Colton

PREFACE

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

(I think this is the proper way to begin every communication of this sort), please let me tell you that this book would, in the ordinary course of events, have seen the light two years ago. A terrible smash-up, however, of which I was the victim, is the cause of the delay. If your verdict is as favourable as it was in the case of 'Gone Away' (which, by the way, will shortly be published at 2*s*.) I shall be more than delighted.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	'MIRABILE EST, IN QUIBUS PARVIS CARDINIBUS MAXIMÆ RES VERTUNT'	1
II.	BOARD SHIP	11
III.	'VIDI'	20
IV.	THE LAND OF THE SETTING SUN	34
V.	A HUNT MEETING, AND WHAT CAME OF IT	54
VI.	FIRST BLOOD	102
VII.	CROSS-COUNTRY QUESTIONS	109
VIII.	G.N.H. AND ANOTHER	127
IX.	COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE	149
X.	EPSOM AND BACK—ESPECIALLY BACK	172
XI.	'MORE MATRIMONY'	192
XII.	THE LEGER	195

HARK FORRARD!

CHAPTER I

Mirabile est, in quibus parvis cardinibus maximæ res vertunt.

Pall Mall: June 5.

My dear Reggie,—You have often heard me talk of my brother-in-law, 'Ray Danby,' in Virginia. He has for the last ten years been most anxious that I should look him up out there. I have at last made up my mind to do so, and as I am already heartily sick of London, I have decided to sail on Wednesday by the 'Scythia,' from Liverpool. Now, I want you to come with me. You have such a good kennel huntsman in Furlby that you may safely leave

your hounds in his charge for the eight or ten weeks that we shall be away. As you never begin cubbing before the first week in September, there is no earthly reason why you should not come. Besides, you have often said that you thought it would be possible to pick up good hunters in Virginia and Kentucky. If you will come I will go halves with you in any horses you may buy up to 'say twenty.' It will just suit you to school them all September and October, as you are never happy unless you are trying to break your neck. You have nothing to do but say you are game to come. Wire to me here to-morrow as soon as you have thought it over, and I will secure the berths. I know Captain Hay of the 'Scythia,' and he will interest himself in our behalf. We are sure of a good cabin and seats at his table. The latter, let me assure you as an old campaigner, being no slight advantage for even so short a passage as ours will be. I begin to think that I am getting old. I did not half enjoy the Derby dinner this season although I

had you alongside of me, and though I must confess you were in the best of form. Do you remember five years ago, how after dinner we went to Evans's, and what a row there was? Your hat got knocked off in the mêlée and you quietly knocked another man's off, caught it and put it on; and how after a lot of hustling we got outside all right, but found that your dress coat was converted into an Eton jacket. As we cannot put the clock back, however, 'Dum vivimus vivamus.' While we are alive, let us be very much alive, to construe it freely. So come without fail.

Yours ever,

ALFRED ACTON.

By the way, you want but little kit. Simply take your thinnest clothes, all your flannels, and some breeches, gaiters, and boots.

Such was the letter received on Friday, June 6, by Reginald Miller from the postman who overtook him as he was strolling back to kennels at eight o'clock this glorious June

morning, surrounded by forty couple of fox-hounds whose bathing parade in the river he had just been superintending.

'Upon my word I have half a mind to go,' said Reginald. 'I don't like leaving these darlings, though, for so long as a couple of months. I should rather like to have a shy at some of these American horses too. Wigston declares that they are capital hunters in their own country, and the soundest beasts he ever saw; wonderful good-legged ones, he says, and roaring is conspicuous by its absence. They have to thank the climate though, for that, I expect.'

To make a long story short, after thinking the pros and cons carefully over, Reginald Miller at last decided to go, and sent off a wire to Acton as follows: 'Yes; bring walking-stick, standard, and two boxes—Henry Clays.' He then picked out a couple of saddles and bridles, and overhauled his wardrobe, and. by luncheon time, as far as he was concerned, was ready to start at any moment.

Reginald Miller was master of the Mendale Hounds, and lived at Radbrook, which, as all hunting men know, is in the very heart of the fairest and best hunting country in the Midlands. When we say fairest, we mean honestest. There is in the whole Mendale country no fence that a really good man on a really good bold horse cannot negotiate. Of course it is not gated anything like as well as High Leicestershire, but it is not necessary. We don't care how brilliant the horse or man, or both, in High Leicestershire, they must perforce sometimes gallop for a gate, as there are fences absolutely unjumpable. We have hunted many seasons in the Mendale country, but can honestly aver that on no single occasion have we ever seen an unnegotiable fence. Still, the country is amply big enough for the greediest of gluttons, and when the Mendale Hounds run, as they so often do, both fast and straight, it is only the good men and true that are there at the finish. It is a good scenting country too, it is well foxed, its farmers are

'Nullis secundi,' and last, but not least, its subscription is good.

Under these circumstances our readers will quite agree with us that Reginald Miller's lines were cast in decidedly pleasant places. A scion of one of the oldest and best families in the county, it was on the retirement of the late master decided to offer the mastership of the Mendale to him, as, though quite a young man, in fact he was but five-and-twenty, he had always taken the keenest interest in the pack, and no better man ever crossed country. He had now been master of the Mendale for two seasons, was a bachelor, and, as he was well off, good looking, and very popular, it may easily be imagined that the ladies, God bless them, gave more than a passing thought to his future. He danced and played tennis, and was as full of fun as man could be, but if ever rallied about any particular maiden, he invariably said, 'My dear fellow, I love them all;' and so he did up to a certain point, but no one could for one instant accuse him of having singled out

any particular fair one. Here then he was, on the eve of his departure for America, in the happy position of a man who had himself only to please.

Having made all arrangements with his kennel huntsman, for he hunted his own hounds, Reginald Miller put himself into the nine o'clock train from Bredford to Liverpool, and at eleven thirty stepped out on to the platform at the Central Station, where he was met and welcomed by his friend Alfred Acton.

'Here you are,' said the last named; 'tell James to bring your luggage to the Adelphi. Holmes and he can take both yours and mine down to the tender at once. We have got a capital cabin. I have seen the captain and purser this morning. There are a lot of passengers, and if you don't agree with me, that one of them is the most beautiful woman you have ever seen, I shall be very much surprised, and if you have not lost that hitherto untouched heart of yours before we reach New York, I shall be still more so.'

'Bother the women! Let us have some lunch.'

'All right, my lad, I have ordered it, and as this is our last chance of a whitebait fuddle, I have ordered a dish of that, a grilled chop, and a magnum of Perrier Jouet seventy-four.'

'Capital!' said Miller. 'I have only had a cup of tea and some toast this morning. I was out with the hounds from half-past five till half-past seven, and had only just time to tub and dress, and catch the nine train. I wonder what the poor beggars will do without me! By Jove! I shall miss them frightfully.'

'Now for goodness' sake, my dear Reginald, shut up. If you are not a good deal more cut up at parting from the fair unknown that I tell you of at the end of the passage, I shall be very much astonished. She is splendid!'

'Upon my word you have quite raised my curiosity,' said Reginald. 'Is she tall or short, dark or fair?'

'Tall, but not too tall; fair, with such

eyes and such hair, and such a charming manner and smile. She was at the shipping office when I was there this morning. I opened the door for her as she went out, and I shall never forget the pleasant smile she gave me.'

'Judging from the way in which you rhapsodise over the fair creature, I should imagine that anybody who does enter the lists will have a very formidable rival in yourself,' said Reginald.

'Nay, lad, I am old enough to be her father, and a bit to spare too. However, here comes old Dudgeon with the whitebait.'

Those of our readers—and legion must be their name—who have ever spent a night at the Adelphi, one of the best hotels in the world, will remember dear old Dudgeon well. There are some waiters who, the instant you clap eyes on them, inspire you with confidence. This gift of inspiration was inherent in Dudgeon to a marvellous extent, and everybody who had ever visited the Adelphi came away convinced that there was but one waiter

in the world, and that Dudgeon was his name. It mattered not whether one table or twenty were occupied, Dudgeon seemed instinctively to know exactly when to appear on the scene and what orders to give to his various satellites, the result invariably being that ere the 'diner' had begun to think that it was time the next course made its appearance the wished for morsel was *en évidence*. More power to the old man's elbow; long may he live!

CHAPTER II

BOARD SHIP

THREE o'clock saw Reggie Miller and his friend Alfred Acton safely on board the 'Scythia,' and some few minutes after, the big ship was under way for Queenstown, where the Cunard boats invariably call to pick up the mails. Alfred Acton had been a great friend of Reggie's father, and as he used to stay at Radbrook in bygone days, when Reginald was a lad home from Eton for the holidays, and was a fine horseman and capital shot, he took great delight in fostering Reggie's talents in that line, which showed themselves most unmistakably at a very early age. It was, therefore, but natural that a deep and lasting friendship between the two should be the result,

although Alfred Acton was twenty years his senior. Having superintended the arrangement of their luggage and seen that the portmanteaux labelled 'Not wanted on the voyage' were safely consigned to the baggage room, they proceeded to make a tour of inspection, during the progress of which Acton constituted himself cicerone.

'By Jove!' said Reggie, 'what clinking bath rooms! And here is the barber's shop close handy. I think I shall be lazy and get shaved every morning. Besides, I expect I should cut myself if there was any sea on.'

'We are going at the right time of year,' said Acton, 'and it is quite possible we may cross the Atlantic without wanting the fiddles on at all.'

'What the deuce are the fiddles?'

'Why; wooden frames that are put on the table to prevent your soup from taking a "header" into the lap of your *vis-à-vis*; they are uncommonly necessary too, I can tell you, when she is knocking about.'

'When who's knocking about?'

'Why, the ship, of course; what else would it be?'

'Now, my dear Alfred, please remember that I don't know one end of a ship from the other, and that the only nautical phrase I know is "Shiver my timbers!" so it is no use your using maritime phraseology to me. I quite thought you meant my *vis-à-vis* would be knocking about. By the way, that reminds me of the peerless goddess of whom you have been talking so much; I wonder where she is, and whether she will be at our table.'

'You may take your oath of that,' said Acton. 'Captain Hay always takes care to get all the beauty and talent at his table, and though the purser nominally settles where people are to sit, the captain pulls the strings. Come and look at the engines.'

'By Gad!' said Reggie, 'how beautifully smoothly they work.'

'Yes,' answered Acton, as watch in hand he counted the revolutions; 'they are doing

sixty-two. You will wake up in Queenstown harbour to-morrow morning.'

The smoking-room and drawing-room having been visited in turn, the two friends strolled up and down the promenade deck till it was time to go down to dinner. Acton had been on the lookout for the 'Fair Unknown,' but had failed to catch even a glimpse of her. The breeze had been freshening for the last hour or two, and but comparatively few ladies graced the dinner tables. Reggie was introduced to Captain Hay, and was requested by one of the stewards to seat himself next but one to the captain. As he did so he could not help speculating as to who would be the occupant of the vacant chair at the end, and on the captain's right hand; Acton was on the captain's left. His curiosity, however, was destined not to be satisfied, at all events on the present occasion. The most cursory glance round sufficed to assure him that the 'Fair Unknown' was decidedly not there, and he came to the conclusion that if she were any-

thing like what Acton had described her she would have it all her own way as regarded personal appearance. The dinner, as usual on the Cunard boats, was excellent, and as Reggie and Acton smoked their after-dinner cigar on deck, they were both agreed that it would be impossible to visit the land of the setting sun under more favourable auspices than the present.

Reggie woke up very early on the following morning, as soon, in fact, as the steamer stopped. It took him some minutes to decide where he was, but the lapping of the water against the side of the ship soon reminded him that he was afloat. He turned out and found that Acton had already gone on deck, so he followed him in his 'pyjamas' which, we may inform our readers, are considered quite orthodox on board ship before eight o'clock.

Queenstown harbour looked very beautiful on this lovely summer morning, bathed in the bright sunlight and dotted with small craft returning from their fishing grounds. After

watching the operation of washing decks for some time, they went below and had first innings at the baths, a visit to the barber's, and then eight bells was sounded.

'I hope there is plenty to eat for breakfast,' said Reggie; 'I am simply ravenous.'

'Ditto, old chap,' said Acton; 'if the sea air won't give a man an appetite, nothing will.'

Despite the fact that the chair on his left was still vacant, Reggie managed to make an excellent breakfast.

'You will have two or three hours ashore,' said the captain, 'if you care to go. We shan't sail before one, at the earliest.'

'We may as well have a look at Queenstown, eh!' said Acton.

'Yes, I shall be glad to stretch my legs,' said Reggie.

Several other passengers availed themselves of the opportunity to go ashore, but Reggie looked in vain for Acton's beautiful maiden.

'I don't believe this young lady has come at all,' said he.

'My dear fellow, you have not seen half of the ladies yet; they will turn up in a day or two.'

There was not much to be seen at Queenstown. The natives evidently thought that passengers were sent into the world to be fleeced, and at every step they were pestered, either to buy lace or give alms, until at last Reginald and Acton decided to return to the ship, which they did, and arrived there in time for lunch.

'Miss Lancelot has not yet honoured us,' said the captain. 'I must inquire whether she suffered from sea-sickness last night.'

'Is that the lady who will occupy this chair?' said Reggie.

'Yes!' answered the captain, 'and if you don't lose your heart to her as soon as you set eyes on her, I shall say that you are a most unimpressionable young man.'

'Exactly what I told him, captain!' said Acton. 'Do you know her, Captain Hay?'

'Certainly I do, right well. Her father, Colonel Lancelot, served through both the

Crimean War and the Mutiny, sold out, emigrated to Virginia, bought a very nice property, and settled there. He married the belle of Washington, whose father owned a fine property adjoining him, and as she was an only daughter, she inherited it all. He is dead, but her mother is still living at Osage Lodge, in Fauquier county. This young lady came to England on a visit about three months ago, and was then put under my special charge. She is now returning, and has, I expect, left many an aching heart behind her in the old country, as it is always called in America.'

Soon after luncheon the mails came on board, accompanied by two or three passengers, who had preferred to come with them, and so had a few more hours in London.

'We are off again,' said Acton; 'the next time those engines stop, bar accident, we shall be alongside the wharf at New York.'

'I wish to goodness I had a horse that could stay as long as the engines can then,' said Reggie. 'I tell you what, I don't at all fancy

seven or eight days more of this. What on earth shall we do with ourselves?'

'That is always the way with people the first day or so. You will find the time literally fly after to-morrow, and though you may not believe it now, you will be quite sorry to leave the ship when the passage is over.'

'I can believe a good deal, my dear Alfred, but that is a little bit too far fetched.'

'Ah well, *nous verrons*,' said Acton.

After dinner that night they got up a rubber of whist, and Reginald was fain to confess that he had somehow or other got through the day very fairly well.

CHAPTER III

'VIDI'

THE next day was simply perfection—not a ripple on the water. In fact, it was literally as calm as the proverbial millpond. Reggie Miller was lazily reclining in his deck chair abaft the funnel, when a steward appeared on the scene carrying a chair and cushions. This he proceeded to arrange in a cosy little nook, having done which he went below.

'I wonder who that is for?' said Reggie to himself. He was not kept long in suspense, as in a few minutes the steward reappeared with a lady leaning on his arm. She walked as though it were a great effort, and sank down among the cushions as if she could not have gone another step. The steward having

arranged the cushions comfortably, left her, and as she lay with her eyes closed, Reggie was enabled to take stock. He was compelled to acknowledge, that though she was deadly pale, still she was quite the most beautiful woman he had ever seen in his life.

'This must be Miss Lancelot,' said he to himself. 'It can't be anybody else, that's certain.'

He felt an intense longing to speak to her, and was on the *qui vive* for an opportunity to break the ice. He had not to wait very long, as, after a few minutes, a book which lay on her lap fell on to the deck. He at once sprang up and handed it to its owner, at the same time expressing a hope that she felt better.

'Thanks; yes,' said she; 'I shall be all right I hope by to-morrow. I am always very ill the first day, but soon pick up afterwards.'

Her voice, however, was so weak that Reginald felt it would be cruel to bother her by talking any more at present. Soon after this the bell rang for luncheon, and as he

passed her chair, Reginald ventured to ask her if he could get her anything.

'Thanks,' said she, 'I have not the least appetite. I feel as if it would be too much trouble to eat.'

'Well, Alfred,' said he, as he encountered his friend at the entrance to the saloon; 'I have made the acquaintance of the lady, and though she is looking awfully ill, I must acknowledge that you did not exaggerate one atom about her looks. I wish she would have something to eat, though; she looks completely exhausted.'

'Take her a pint of champagne and a dry biscuit, my lad; there is nothing in the world like it. It licks all the physic in the world in a case like this.'

'By Jove! I will,' said he. 'Steward, bring me a pint bottle of the dryest champagne you have on board.'

'Now,' said he, as he advanced to Miss Lancelot's chair, 'I have ventured to constitute myself your physician for once. I have had a

great deal of experience.' (Let us hope he will be forgiven.) 'You must be so kind as to try to drink a little of this champagne and eat this dry biscuit.'

'You are really very kind, and I will try and drink some, but I don't feel as if I could.'

'Ah,' said Reginald, as, after she had sipped about half a glass, he saw the faintest tinge of colour on her cheek, 'it is doing you good already; do try and finish the glass.'

'I declare I do feel better for it,' said she, as she munched a bit of biscuit.

'Now a little more champagne. Nay, I insist,' and so by degrees the contents of the greater part of the bottle disappeared, leaving the fair patient a very different creature at the end of the process.

'Now,' said Reginald. 'I venture to think that my medicine has been an unqualified success. I shall bring you up another rug, as it is none too warm here, and you will have a good sleep. I will arrange an umbrella so as to keep the sun off your face.'

'I don't know how to thank you enough,' said Miss Lancelot; 'you have made a new woman of me. I could hardly crawl on deck, and I feel almost as if I could dance now.'

'I shan't allow anything of that sort at present,' answered the self-constituted physician, as he tucked her rug round her. 'I trust that when you are fit to dance I shall have the privilege of being your partner on the occasion.'

'Well,' said Acton, as a few minutes after he and Reginald met, 'how is the Fair Unknown?'

'No longer unknown by any means,' answered Reginald. 'The champagne has worked wonders, and by the time she has had a good sleep she will be just about all right.'

'Come and play nap,' said Acton; 'there are two other people who want to play. It will while away an hour or two of the afternoon.'

'No, thank you,' said Reginald; 'I mean to walk up and down a bit, and get an appetite.'

Walk up and down he did, too, for the next

two hours, and that always on the side where lay the fair patient. In fact, he constituted himself a sort of Cerberus, and dismissed a party of children (who were playing near and making a good deal of noise) with such gruffness that the youngest, a little lass of four years, ran to its mother and said, 'Mummy, the gentleman with the kind face is so angry, I think he must feel sea-sick.'

Now, Reginald Miller was very fond of children, and they simply doted on him; he was at home with them in five minutes, and the very shyest child never could resist his manner for long. He was, however, on this occasion so absorbed in the welfare of his patient that for once he spoke sharply.

Under the circumstances I suppose he must be forgiven. However, a shoal of porpoises making their appearance on the starboard bow, he held the little lassie up, and told her all about them, and so quickly made his peace. As he returned the child to her mother, he saw that his patient was awake,

and, hurrying to her side, he expressed a hope that she was better.

'So much so, that I should like to take three or four turns on the deck,' said she.

'Will you accept my arm?' said Reginald.

'I was just going to ask you to take compassion on me if you would,' said she.

It is needless to say that Reginald was delighted to act as escort, though his pleasure was but short-lived, as she very soon felt tired, and asked him to take her below. Having done this and delivered her into the charge of the stewardess, her own maid being more thoroughly *hors de combat* than she was, he went to the smoking room, where he found Acton and two others playing nap.

'Will you come in?' said Acton.

'Thanks; just for half an hour.'

'Well, I'll be shot!' said one of the party, as Reginald went nap and only made two of them. 'What on earth did you go on?'

'Champagne,' said Reginald. 'I mean, oh!

I wasn't thinking, at least I forgot that it was nap we were playing.'

Suffice it to say that, at the expiration of half an hour, Master Reginald rose from the table, we won't say either a sadder or a wiser, but we must acknowledge that he was a poorer man by some few sovereigns.

As he entered the saloon at dinner time, Reginald was delighted to see that Miss Lancelot's hitherto unoccupied chair was no longer so.

'Now, Miss Lancelot,' said Captain Hay, 'allow me to introduce you to your two *compagnons de voyage*, Mr. Miller and Mr. Acton.'

'Quite unnecessary in one instance, I can assure you,' said she; 'though are you quite sure it ought not to be "Doctor Miller?"'

'And I too,' said Acton, 'have had the honour of seeing you before, Miss Lancelot.'

'To be sure, it was you who opened the door for me at the office on Wednesday

morning, wasn't it? I remember wondering whether you would be a fellow passenger.'

Now, there was not the slightest reason for it, but poor Acton felt himself getting hot all over, and blushing crimson, and the fact that Reginald's eyes were fixed on him, and as far as eyes could were roaring with laughter, did not by any means conduce to his comfort.

What a wonderful thing travel is. It ought to be the most important part of an Englishman's education. Naturally we Britons are all inclined to look at every stranger as if we thought they wanted to rob us. We ourselves have travelled from London to Glasgow in the same carriage with a man, and not one syllable has been interchanged between us during the whole journey. If either of us had hazarded a remark, the ice would have been broken, and it is long odds that ere we reached our journey's end we should have found that we had scores of mutual friends, had ridden over the same fences, and shot over the same ground, but we did not break the ice. *Ergo*, we might as well

(as far as getting the least atom of pleasure out of each other's society was concerned) have travelled in different compartments. That, however, was before the author had been round the world.

The old order changeth, and for one person who ten years ago girdled the zone, there are now a hundred, who without any more preparation than our grandfathers made on the eve of a journey from London to Paris, place themselves and their 'impedimenta' in the Plymouth express at Paddington, and thence transfer themselves to one of the magnificent steamers of either the P. & O., Orient, Shaw Saville, or New Zealand Shipping Companies. It is even betting too that during the whole of that voyage of thirteen thousand miles, they will experience far less discomfort than did our aforementioned ancestors during their short transit of the English Channel. In the present instance, however, Captain Hay, as all who have the privilege of his acquaintance are aware, being the life and soul of any and every

party, and his manner being infectious, 'the quartette' at his end of the table felt as if they were old friends by the time that dinner was over.

We do not intend to victimise our readers with a sort of diary of each day spent on the 'Scythia,' but the exigencies of our story compel us to keep them on board a little longer.

Lina Lancelot, Reginald, and Acton became inseparable companions, and for the first three or four days all went merry as a marriage bell. By small degrees, however, Reginald began to think that Acton was always getting in the way, and Acton found himself repeating the proverb 'that two is company and three none.' Now Acton, though a man of five-and-forty, had in all his life had but one *affaire*, and that had turned out so disastrously that for many years afterwards he was almost a misogynist. Here, however, was a wine whose bouquet was so sweet that it fairly turned his head and made him long once more to sip from the cup.

Lina Lancelot, of course, saw how fond of her both men were becoming, and though she enjoyed the society of both immensely, she began to behave in a markedly different manner to each. She did not mind how much she was left alone with Acton, but if she and Reginald happened to be by themselves, she was always inventing excuses to go below or into the drawing-room, or to romp with the children.

The truth of the matter was, she began to dread whether this were not only a mere board ship flirtation on his part, whose trammels he would, as so many men do, throw off at the expiration of the voyage with as little ado as he cast aside his deck shoes.

In truth, as day succeeded day and she felt her own heart slipping away from her control, her manner to Reginald became almost cold. No girl who is worth a row of pins, even if she does give her heart away, will ever let the man who has stolen it have the least idea of his conquest until he first has spoken, and many

a man has gone away lacking the courage to cast the die, when, had he only dared to do so, his answer would have been all that he could wish.

As to Reginald Miller and Acton they neither of them spoke a word to each other on the subject, in fact they held but little converse. Reginald would patrol the decks till late at night smoking cigar after cigar, and thinking of Lina, and as Acton was invariably fast asleep when he turned in and got up very early, they did not come much in contact with each other.

The last day or two of the passage were almost unbearable to Reginald, and he could not but acknowledge that he hourly lost ground, and for some reason or other Lina Lancelot positively shunned his society. As to Acton he was in the seventh heaven; he was very sorry for Reginald, as he saw that he too loved this girl, but he felt that he had at least as much right to enter the lists as had Reginald, and though he inwardly

wondered many a time and oft how she could prefer an old fossil like himself to a fine young fellow like Reginald, still he accepted the good the gods provided and basked in the sunshine of her charms, the only drop of bitterness in the cup being that the inevitable hour of parting must come, and that it was indeed approaching with terrible rapidity.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAND OF THE SETTING SUN

At length arrived the eighth day, when the various passengers on board the 'Scythia' bid adieu to the good ship which had safely borne them over the pathless waste, and also to their various fellow passengers whose acquaintance they had made during the voyage. It is, 'to those who think,' quite a sad page in life's book, this separation. Even one short week spent on board ship will enable one to know one's fellow men and women better than years spent within visiting distance in the country, and when the voyage lasts for six weeks, as is the case when the journey is to Australia, the truest and most lasting friendships are made, ay, and in many instances life-long partnerships agreed upon.

There is no place in the world where a person's true character comes to the surface so surely as on board ship. A grip of the hand at parting ; 'Hope we shall meet again ! You have got that address ! Be sure you write. Good-bye. old fellow,' and there perhaps, in fact most probably, passes once and for all out of your life the man whose cabin you have shared, who has perhaps been *par excellence* your pal during the whole six weeks ; and yet so fickle is the human heart, so prone to seek fresh fields and pastures new, that ere a fortnight has elapsed, the pal whom you missed so sorely the first day, to whom you promised so faithfully to write, has been thought of less and less frequently, until at last he has almost passed from your thoughts.

Still perhaps it is as well that it is so. If we were always constant to the past, we should be but poor companions in the present. 'Carpe diem,' and 'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof,' are two good mottoes. If in conjunction with these one can say, 'Whatever is is

best,' and feel it too, mind you! why then a man has become as near a philosopher as he can expect to get.

Miss Lancelot was met at the landing-stage by her mother, and one glance at the mother sufficed to tell that it would indeed have been strange had the daughter been otherwise than beautiful. A magnificent woman was Mrs. Lancelot, and though of course not quite as young as she had been, it seemed impossible to believe that she was the mother of the beautiful girl at her side.

Lina insisted on introducing both Reginald and Acton to her mother, and dwelt particularly on the former's kindness to her at first, when she suffered so from *mal de mer*. Reginald had, however, come to the conclusion that absence was the only remedy for his complaint, and declining Mrs. Lancelot's kind invitation to dine at her New York house that evening, he got his things through the Customs, put them on a hack, and drove straight to the Brevoort House, which, though not so large as

the Windsor or Fifth Avenue, was a thoroughly comfortable hotel, and one in fact which has ever been very popular with English people. He dined at Delmonico's solus. He had a terrible fit of the blues on, and could not shake them off anyhow.

For the first time in his life he disliked Acton; he could not help feeling frightfully jealous of him, and when that individual turned up, felt but little inclination to hold any conversation with his successful rival, as he imagined him to be. One glance at Acton's face, however, sufficed to tell him that something very serious had happened. Poor Acton! he was indeed not to be envied, and when he told Reginald how, emboldened by the evident pleasure Lina had taken in his society, he ventured after dinner on the verandah to tell his love, and how she kindly but firmly, though evidently deeply distressed thereat, had said him nay, then indeed did Reginald feel angry with himself for having for one

instant allowed his jealousy to overpower his affection for his true and trusty friend.

'I am so sorry, old man. I was a brute to you. I was jealous; I could not help it If it is any consolation to you, I have suffered awfully these last few days. But let us both try to forget all that has passed since we left England. Oh dear! I wish I was back with the hounds. I wish we had never started.'

'Don't say that,' said Acton. 'Much as I suffer, I shall always look back on that week as worth all the others that I have spent put together.'

'What's that the poet says?' said Reginald, '"'Twere better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all." I can't agree with him at all events, whatever you may think. Do you really think her refusal is final, old chap?'

'Alas! I know it is. She spoke too firmly, too decidedly, too regretfully to make me feel that there was a thousand-to-one chance, even in the remote future. Besides, I did venture to

ask her very humbly if her heart was her own. She coloured up like lightning, and in an instant was pale as death, and said, "You may ask, Mr. Acton, and I will tell you; my heart is not my own." I thanked her, made an excuse to her mother that you were all alone, and somehow or other found myself in the street. So that is all over, but as I said before I would rather it had ended like this than that I had never seen her. Oh, that week of bliss!'

'Well,' said Reginald, 'we must be off as soon as possible to Virginia. I vote we go to-morrow. New York is beastly hot, and it can't be worse in the country, probably be a lot better; besides, I want to get amongst the horses.'

'I am quite ready to start to-morrow. I expect the faithful Holmes will have unpacked all our things though; I am very glad you sent James back from Liverpool, as the accommodation in the country-houses here is nothing marvellous from what Ray Danby tells me in his letters.'

The evening train of the following day bore

our two friends off to Philadelphia *en route* to Washington, which they reached early next morning after a good night's rest in the cars. Finding that the train for Catletts did not start for an hour, they breakfasted at the refreshment rooms. Three hours brought them to their destination, where they were met and welcomed by Ray Danby.

'Here you are at last,' said he, as, having loaded up the baggage on an American waggon, they themselves got up into Ray Danby's high tandem cart, which was a long way the smartest turn out for many miles round. 'Now, how long can you stop? Mary won't let you off under six weeks at least. I don't think she will believe it is you really come till she sees you.'

'Well,' said Acton, 'I tell you what Miller wants to do; he wants to buy some galloping thirteen or fourteen stone horses if they are to be got. In fact, I have agreed to go halves in any that he buys up to twenty.'

'H'm,' said Danby; 'I know every horse worth a row of pins within a hundred miles of

here, and I know some good ones, sound, well-bred, and up to a nice bit of weight, but I think it will take us all our time to find ten fit to take home.'

'I don't mind how uneducated they are,' said Reginald, 'if they are only true-made ones. I don't care to buy them less than five years old, as however brilliantly a four-year-old may carry you, he is always either springing a curb or putting up a splint or something.'

'I quite agree with you there,' said Danby. 'Now look here; your best plan will be to make my house your headquarters. I will make out a list of the places where I know the best horses are, and I will write to some of the people who are a long way off and tell them to bring the horses over here. I know six or eight that you are certain to buy. There is one clinker called Independent; he is such a good 'un that they bar him at all the race meetings within fifty miles of here, and Maddox told me at Culpeper last court day that the

horse was a white elephant to him now, and that he would sell him for one hundred and fifty dollars; that's thirty pounds, you know. He is very cheap at a hundred pounds in England; he tells me he is a beautiful natural jumper.'

'I say,' said Reginald, 'that sounds all right. I am quite anxious to see him.'

'Well,' said Danby, 'if you don't like him, when you do see him, I shall be very much surprised indeed.'

'Now look here, you two horse-copers,' broke in Acton, 'I know exactly how it will be. We shall have horse for breakfast, horse for lunch, and horse for dinner, all day and every day, now that you have got together, and it will serve you both jolly well right if you have it at night too, only it will be "mare" then.'

'I say,' said Reginald, 'have you got any foxes here?'

'Yes indeed, two kinds. The grey fox is a miserable brute though, you can't make him face the open; in fact he rings infinitely worse than a bad hare. Now and then we get on to

a red fox, and then I have known hounds to run a tremendous point; they always run clean away from their field though.'

'Whacking big fences these timber things are, and uncommon solid too,' said Reginald.

'Yes, we call them snake fences. Some of these horses jump them uncommonly well though, and I will guarantee to find you at least six that will jump any ordinary English gate. There is a man lives up that avenue to the left—his name is Howson—and he has got one real nice horse about 15.3, six years old, and up to thirteen stone. I have ridden him many a time. I think one hundred and fifty dollars would certainly buy him. You will get some horses for one hundred dollars, and I know one four-year-old that you must take home, though he is only four. I also know a beautiful pair of black horses, 15.1, about four and five years old; they go like clockwork, and are fast enough to win trotting races.'

'That's a game that we don't play at in England,' said Reginald, 'and it is a taste that

it would certainly take me a long time to acquire. However, a really well-matched pair of harness horses, with action, are always worth a lot of money at home.'

By this time they had reached the gate leading into Ray Danby's drive, and here they were met by Mrs. Danby and her two children, respectively seven and five years old. Acton jumped down and greeted his sister, who was overjoyed to see him, and telling Ray Danby and Reginald to drive on, he strolled home with her and the children.

Now Alfred Acton and his sister had, until she married some ten years before, been almost inseparable, and very fond of her brother was she. She saw at once that there was something wrong with him, and telling the children to run on ahead, she said: 'Alfred, dear, you are looking worried and harassed. What is the matter with you? You are too old a traveller to be upset by the passage.'

'I am worried, Mary, dear, and some day perhaps I will tell you all about it, but I am

not going to bother you with my troubles, and indeed the sight of you has already done wonders for me. Ray and Reginald Miller will become the firmest of friends, as their mutual love of horse will be a bond of union between them; so you and I will have lots of each other's society, and you will soon set me up again.'

'Yes, and I will drive you all over the country in my own little buggy that I bought with the money you sent me on my last birthday. See, there is the house.'

As she spoke they rounded a bend in the road, and there on the opposite slope lay the house, a square two-storied wooden edifice, with a big verandah running round three sides of it. The garden sloped down to the 'run,' as they call a brook in America, and all round the house were turkeys, ducks, and fowls in great numbers. Some seventy yards in the rear were the stables, buildings, &c.

'But first come and see my bonnie Maryland,' said Mrs. Danby. 'Ray gave her to me last year; she can fly in harness.'

They were met at the stable-door by a jovial grinning gentleman of colour, who rejoiced in the name of Augustus Ebenezer Gabriel Washington Smith (uncommon fond are the niggers of swell names). He saluted Acton in a sort of half-military fashion, grinning the while to such an extent that Acton had time to count all the 'ivories' thereby displayed, and also wonder how much farther he could stretch the corners of his mouth without cracking them.

The 'fair Maryland' having been duly inspected and admired, they were summoned to the house by Ray Danby, who played 'Buy a Broom' on the coach horn, and played it so well that he need not have feared to compete with the best of the guards on the numerous coaches that daily ply from Northumberland Avenue to all sorts of places within fifty miles of London.

'Now then, Alfred, I will show you your room,' said he, as they approached. 'You and Miller are in the "Garden House," as we call it.'

Those of our readers who have ever been in Virginia will know that nearly all the country-

houses have two or three of these bachelor quarters dotted about in the grounds near the house, and a very nice arrangement it is. The present garden house was within ten yards of the 'run,' and as Ray Danby had made a bathing place just below it, they had nothing to do but tumble out of bed, and take a header into the stream.

'I suppose you both feel inclined to take it a bit easy, don't you?' said Ray Danby, as, luncheon over, they settled themselves in the verandah, or as the Virginians themselves call it, the 'poach,' which is their way of pronouncing 'porch.'

'As far as I am concerned,' said Reginald, 'I don't mean to stir until the sun goes down. It will surely be cooler then, and if you have any horses within an hour's ride, we might go and have a look at them.'

'You would have to look at them by candlelight if you did that,' said Ray Danby. 'We have not got the dear old English twilight here; it is dark half an hour after sunset.'

'What a fearful place to live in,' said Reginald.

'It is a good enough place as places go, and if we were only under the English flag, it would be very hard to beat.

Yes, but remember that go where you will on the face of the globe, there is only one country to live in, and that is England,' said Acton. 'Other countries are all very well to sojourn in and to visit, but nowhere can you have the home-comforts in perfection.'

'I tell you what we will do, if you like,' said Mrs. Danby, who had just joined them on the verandah. 'We will drive over to the Howsons for supper, and then Mr. Miller can see the horse that you think so much of, Ray.'

'A capital plan,' said Ray. 'By the way, you will find that all the people here dine in the middle of the day, but though they call it supper at night you can make a good square meal of it.'

The Howsons were the Danbys' nearest

neighbours, and fortunately their greatest friends. A drive of twenty minutes behind the flying Maryland brought them to the house, just as the sun sank behind the blue mountains.

'By the way, Harry,' said Ray, after he had introduced the two visitors, 'should you care to sell Vermont?'

'Depends on the price,' said Howson. 'I *will* sell him, as I have a lot of younger horses coming on. In fact I was counting up the stock yesterday, and I find that I have no less than thirty-seven horses of sorts on the place, and I'll be hanged if they are half as profitable as cattle!'

'Let's have him out,' said Ray Danby; 'there is just light enough to put him over those two flights of rails.'

'Certainly!' said Howson.

The trio then adjourned to the stable, where they found the groom just about to turn Vermont out for the night.

For the benefit of those readers who have never been in Virginia, we may tell them that

the usual custom there is, to keep two or three horses up during the day, saddled and bridled, and hitched up as they call it, to a tree; so that if any member of the family wants a horse he just unhitches one, jumps on to his back, and canters away.

'Saddle Vermont at once,' said Howson.

Ray Danby put the bridle on while the groom was saddling, and in less than a minute rode out of the stable on the horse's back. Quite a nice horse was he, bay, 15.2½, showing a lot of quality, and with such a capital back and short legs, that he looked well up to thirteen stone over an English country.

Ray cantered him down to a gate, opened it, and set him going in the field beyond. Swinging round to the right at the far end of it, he came straight for some posts and rails that divided the fields. Meanwhile Howson, Acton, and Reginald had strolled across the lawn to the sunk fence which overlooked the fields beneath. The horse behaved to perfection, just shortened his stride as he got close to the fence, steadied

himself, and popped over cleverly. Ray turned him round and trotted him back at it; he jumped it equally well.

'May I have a ride?' said Reginald.

'Certainly!' said Howson.

Springing down the sunk fence, Reginald was soon on the horse's back, and after a five minutes' ride, and 'throwing a couple of laps,' as Paddy says, he came to the conclusion that if it were possible the horse should be his property before he left the house. Dismounting, he gave him to the groom, and was soon in deep consultation with Ray Danby.

'I see you mean to have him,' said the latter; 'he is a nice horse, isn't he? Worth a bit of money at home. How he would carry a woman, wouldn't he? Such a perfect mouth.'

'I certainly do mean to have him, and I will ask you to do the deal for me if you don't mind.'

By this time it was quite dark, and the supper-bell ringing, they were soon seated round the hospitable board. Hospitality in Virginia

cannot be excelled, and a Virginian supper is a meal to be remembered. In addition to all the dishes we have at home, you there have the delicious buckwheat cakes, the Indian corn just plucked from the stalk, the magnificent tomatoes, the charming Cantelupe melons, the sweet potatoes, and a lot of other delicacies.

As they drove away from the house the moon was rising over the woods, and not only lighted them on their homeward way, but bathed the country side in that sweet soft light which so beautifies all it touches.

'Well, have you bought him?' were Reginald's first words as they drove away.

'Yes, I have. What do you think I gave for him?'

'A hundred and fifty dollars?'

'No; a hundred and thirty. I think he is worth it too. I fancy you will be able to get the horses home from Baltimore for ten pounds a head, all told, and if you can land a high-class galloping hunter like Vermont for forty pounds, you can't go wrong, can you?'

'No, indeed; should like to have him over at your place, and use him as a hack while I am with you, if you don't mind.'

'I thought you would, so I have arranged that he is to be sent over to-morrow morning.'

'Maryland knows the way home,' said Acton. 'I should not care to go this pace along a road that I didn't know, even in England, and I cannot congratulate you on your roads in this country.'

'They are beautiful though now, my dear Alfred,' said Mrs. Danby. 'You should see them in winter; they are positively impassable in some places.'

CHAPTER V

A HUNT MEETING, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

THE next few days were spent in riding about to look at the few horses that were in the neighbourhood, and three more were added to the string.

'Here is a letter from Maddox,' said Ray Danby one day when the mail arrived. 'Let us see what he says about Independent. He is out and out the best horse in this country, and I am quite sure that if you can get him, you will make the very best steeplechase horses at home look to their laurels. Yes, he says he will sell him for three hundred and fifty. I thought he could be bought for even less than that, but he is dirt cheap even at that price. He wants us to go over and see him to-morrow if possible.'

'How far is it?' said Reginald.

'Oh! only an hour and a half from Catletts.'

'All right; let us go to-morrow.'

Suffice it to say that they not only went, but that after riding the horse they bought him. He was a really charming horse, 15.3½, nearly, if not quite, thoroughbred; in fact the only doubt that existed as to his being a clean bred 'un was a little uncertainty as to his grand-dam's pedigree, but as she won all the long-distance races in the South before the War, there was but little the matter with her breeding.

'What do you fellows say to going to Washington next week?' said Ray Danby the following day. 'I see the Dunmore Club have their race meeting at Ivy City on Thursday and Saturday. Washington is a charming place, and is the best-paved city in the world.'

'I am game to go, certainly,' said Reginald.

'And I too,' said Acton.

'I wish Independent was entered for some of the races there. He would take a lot of

beating,' said Danby. 'Maddox said the horse was just about fit to run; in fact, if he had not sold him to you he intended to run him at Fredericksburg the week after next. I think you will both enjoy this meeting at Washington. All the horses that run must be owned and ridden by recognised members of some of the hunt clubs, and they are uncommonly strict in enforcing the rules. It is marvellous what strides hunting and hunt meetings have made in America during the last ten years. It is a positive fact that ten years ago there did not exist a pack of hounds in the country under proper management, and now you can find at least thirty packs, and in the majority of cases hounds, huntsmen, and whips have been imported from England. They go, too, like blazes, I can tell you. Nearly all the fences are timber, and the highest timber-jumpers in the world are to be found here. Six foot ten and three-quarters has been jumped by a horse bred in Canada: he has repeatedly jumped six foot six inches, and at the Boston show last

fall he jumped six feet ten inches and three-quarters.'

'Now, there is a horse that would be worth taking home if you like,' said Reginald. 'I remember that two or three years ago half London went to see six feet jumped by an Australian horse at the Aquarium. I wonder what the owner of this horse would take for him.'

'I don't know, but you are nearly sure to meet him at Washington, as he is a member of the Rockaway Club up North, and always runs his horses here. I fancy though, that you will hardly be able to induce him to sell, as he is a rich man, and likes to be the owner of the highest jumper in the world. There are scores of horses in this country that think nothing of jumping five feet six inches. By the way, I have engaged Jim Russell for you; he is a capital man with a horse, and you can safely leave all your horses here under his charge while we are away.'

The following Wednesday saw the quartette

comfortably installed at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington. Washington is, we would inform our readers, one of the very nicest, cleanest, and best-paved cities in the world, and is in marked contrast to New York as regards its paving. In fact the author can conscientiously assert, that whereas New York is without exception far and away the worst-paved city he has ever seen, Washington is quite the best. Pennsylvania Avenue is a beautiful boulevard, and, as are all the other thoroughfares, is planted with trees.

At breakfast the following morning the arrangements for the day's sport were read aloud to the assembled party by Ray Danby. The first race was fixed for three o'clock, and a special train which left at 2.15 was to land them within two hundred and fifty yards of the course, which was four miles out from Washington. There were to be five races, and a return special was to leave at 5.45, so enabling the race-goers to get back in ample time for dinner. The morning was spent in a visit to

the Capitol, where the American Parliament sits. This is one of the most beautiful buildings on earth, and was immensely admired by the whole party.

The course, or as it is always called in America, the 'track,' was reached in ample time for the first race. The track was an oval with the best possible turns, and like all courses in the States, was perfectly level, and instead of grass, as we have in England, was simply soil harrowed repeatedly till it was first-rate going. As most of our readers are doubtless aware, the time test is implicitly believed in by our American cousins, and, under the circumstances, rightly too. The gradients, which on our courses are of infinite variety, do not exist there, and their absence, coupled with the fact that the atmosphere in America is much more rarefied than at home, is undoubtedly the cause of the marvellously fast times that are made there. It is, at all events, an indisputable fact that American horses cannot and do not make such fast time in England as they do in their

own country. America has, however, sent us over some really good horses, Parole, Iroquois, and Foxhall to wit, to say nothing of Duke of Magenta, who, had he not gone dead amiss in England, would undoubtedly have added to the laurels already won by our Transatlantic cousins.

Having safely deposited Mrs. Danby in the Grand Stand, the three men descended to the saddling paddock to take stock of the competitors for the first race. One of the first people they met was Mr. Howlett, the owner of Ontario, the marvellous high jumper, and to him Ray Danby introduced the others.

'I have been hearing all about your wonderful jumper,' said Reginald Miller; 'I should much like to see him.'

'That you can easily do,' said his owner, 'as he is at this moment in Washington. I am going to take him on to Baltimore to the show next week. If you gentlemen have nothing better to do, I will drive you back after the races. You can see him, and then dine with me at the Metropolitan Club.'

This invitation was accepted, and the bell ringing for going to the post, the trio returned to the Grand Stand to get a view of the race. This was neither more nor less than a procession, as Mr. Howlett's Buckshot, ridden by Mr. Foxley Sharpe, went to the front the instant the flag fell, and won almost in a trot by half a dozen lengths. This gentleman, we may add, has done what we believe has never been done before by any of our own gentlemen riders, ridden in every race on the day's card and won them all.

'I see you have a Pari Mutuel here,' said Reginald to Ray Danby, as they strolled about the inclosure after the race.

'Yes, that is a very popular way of backing horses in this country. They deduct ten per cent. from your winnings, but then they don't *welsh* you. Pool selling is also a very favourite game of the bookmakers.'

'Suppose we walk across the course and look at some of the steeplechase fences,' said Reginald.

'All right; we shall find that the ground is like iron, I expect, but they don't mind that in this country.'

They had no sooner crossed the course and got among the carriages on the other side, than Ray Danby's attention was drawn to a lady who was most unmistakably bowing either to Reginald or himself, and as he had not the slightest remembrance of ever having seen her in his life, he felt sure that the bow must be intended for Reginald.

'Do you know a lady up on the top of that coach who is bowing to you?'

Reginald looked, and saw Lina Lancelot. His first impulse was to cut and run, but he felt that, however much he might wish to do so, that was impossible, so bowing to the lady, he went up to the coach.

'How do you do, Mr. Miller? Who would ever have thought of meeting you here? Is Mr. Acton with you?'

'Yes, indeed he is; allow me to introduce you to Mr. Danby, with whom we are staying,

and whose wife is Mr. Acton's sister. But what brings you here?'

'Well, you see we have a house in Washington, and I persuaded mother to come here for a week, as in addition to the races there is a very good ball which we call a German. You ought to come to it; it is to-morrow night.'

'I am quite sure that my wife will be delighted to go to it,' said Danby. 'She is very fond of dancing, and gets but little chance where we live in Virginia, as there is hardly a dance of any description in our neighbourhood unless when they have one or two at the White Sulphur Springs, near Warrington.'

'As far as I am concerned,' said Reginald, 'I am not a votary of Terpsichore, and always feel inclined to agree with the Chinese Ambassador who, when taken to a ball at the Mansion House and asked what he thought of it, said, "Yes, it is beautiful, but such hard work. I wonder you don't get your servants to do it for you."'

'Well, I daresay we shall see some of you,' said Miss Lancelot.

'I think I can safely promise that my wife and I will be there,' said Ray Danby, 'and I am sure that Alfred will come with us. If it was a case of riding twenty horses across country, Mr. Miller would not think it a bit too much trouble, but in this case I dare not answer for him.'

The two friends continued their walk, and after an inspection of the course came to the conclusion that it was very much like an English steeplechase country, though ditches on the take off side were conspicuous by their absence.

'Where did you meet Miss Lancelot?' said Danby. 'In England, I suppose.'

'She was a fellow-passenger of ours on board the "Scythia" coming out.'

'What a good-looking girl she is!'

'Yes!' answered Reginald, but in such a curt sort of manner that Ray Danby thought it as well to let the subject drop. He could not, however, help wondering what was up, as he

had noticed Reginald's constrained manner the whole time that they were talking to Miss Lancelot.

As they got back to the paddock the numbers were just going up for the Hunters' Flat Race, and Mr. Howlett's Mogul was made favourité. Neptune, ridden by Mr. Maddox, the best horseman in Virginia (Ray Danby always excepted), was second favourite, and the betting foreshadowed the result, as Mogul won comfortably by a length and a half, though Neptune, had he been as fit as the winner, would undoubtedly have beaten him; he had, however, hardly eaten a mouthful of anything since his arrival in Washington four days before.

'Where did you think Independent would have been?' said Danby after the race to Reginald.

'I think he would have won easy.'

'Do you? So do I. Now look here; if you are game to pop it down, you can win a thousand dollars like a shot. Howlett will back his horse, and so will all the fellows here. Be-

sides, this very horse, Mogul, beat Independent a year ago in this same race, but Independent was not fit to run against a jackass then. I begged Maddox not to run him; he had only just got over a real bad attack of influenza, and though he was looking fresh and well, he had no muscle on him, and was, as they all are after that, as weak as a cat. Mind you, Mogul is very fit now, fitter than your horse, as yours wants a couple of good gallops; but still I am game to back yours if he runs.'

'How are we to work it?' said Reginald.

'No trouble about that; leave it to me. We dine with Howlett to-night at the Metropolitan Club; and if we were as sure of winning as we are of getting a match on, we might be quite happy.'

'All right, then; I will leave it all to you.'

After partaking of a most excellent dinner at the Metropolitan Club, during the course of which the day's sport was the principal topic of conversation, they adjourned to the smoking room.

'Mr. Howlett,' said Ray Danby, 'are you game to make a match against Independent, the horse that Mogul beat here last year?'

'Certainly I am,' responded Howlett, 'but I shall be sorry for the backers of Independent. As your delightful old Jorrocks says, "It is a guinea 'at to a 'arf-crown gossamer" on Mogul beating that horse, whenever or wherever they meet, either on the flat or over a country.'

'Well, but remember that Independent was a long way from fit last time they met, and though not cherry-ripe now, I know that he is really well and full of muscle.'

'I don't care how well he is. Mogul would have won by a hundred yards to-day if we had wanted to, but Foxy Sharpe knows better than to do that.'

'Very well, then,' said Ray Danby, 'I will back Independent to run Mogul either on the flat or over hurdles on Monday next.'

'Has Maddox authorised you to make this match?'

'No, he has not. But Mr. Miller here bought the horse last week from Maddox, and though not wound up to concert pitch, he is stones a better horse than he was last year.'

'If Mr. Miller likes to have a friendly match I shall be delighted,' said Howlett.

'By all means, then, let us do so,' said Reginald. 'For how much, shall we say? Five hundred dollars? We don't want to win a lot of money from each other, I am sure.'

'Certainly not. I will run you two miles over the Ivy City course, eight flights of hurdles, each horse to carry one hundred and sixty-eight pounds.'

'Let me see. How much is a hundred and sixty-eight pounds?' answered Reginald.

'Twelve stone,' put in Ray Danby. 'They always talk in pounds here; if you ask a man what he weighs, he will always tell you so many pounds. One has to think how much it is at first, but one soon gets used to it.'

'I shall be delighted,' said Reginald.

'Who will you get to ride?'

'I shall ride my own. I suppose you will put up Mr. Sharpe.'

'That I certainly shall, if he can stay down here to ride.'

'I have to ride at Coney Island on Tuesday,' said Foxhall Sharpe, 'but I can easily manage it, as I can go up by the night train to New York. Do you want to back your horse, Mr. Miller? I should like to have a few dollars on my mount, and unless Independent has improved a great deal since last year, I shall beat you very easily.'

'I will back my horse for two hundred and fifty dollars if you like,' said Reginald.

'Agreed,' said Sharpe.

The news of the match had by this time spread through the club, and as almost every man dining in the club that night had been at Ivy City during the day, they all took great interest in it. Reginald was positively inundated with offers to lay against his horse, and before the evening was over he found on consulting his book that he had backed Independent for no less than seventeen hundred and fifty

dollars, in addition to the five hundred dollars for which the match was originally made. Ray Danby too had several wagers, so that the match bid fair to be the most sporting event that had taken place in Washington for many a day. Ray Danby sent off a telegram first thing next morning, telling Jim Russell to come down with the horse.

Miss Lancelot and her mother called on Mrs. Danby at the Shoreham Hotel in the afternoon, and were delighted to find that it was the intention of the whole party to go to the dance that night. Reginald Miller took the precaution of having a Turkish bath, and, weighing, he found that he could ride twelve stone in his own seven-pound saddle, so he sent Russell a wire to bring that down with him on the following day.

'I hope you will enjoy your dance to-night,' said he, as they sat down to dinner at their hotel.

'Are you not coming?' said Mrs. Danby. 'I am sure the Lancelots will be awfully disappointed if you don't.'

'Must take great care of myself,' said he. 'You see I have to ride two miles over hurdles on Monday, and there is a tremendous lot of money on. Ray Danby will have to walk home if I don't win.'

'You might come just for an hour or two, old man,' said Acton, with a meaning look. 'I am going, and if you do ever dance I can promise you a real treat, as I am quite sure that my sister will dance with you.'

'Speak for yourself if you please. How do you know that I have not promised every dance already?' said Mrs. Danby. 'However, though I am an old married woman I do love dancing as much as ever I did, and shall be delighted to dance with you if you will come, Mr. Miller.'

'There, Master Reginald, I think you are fairly landed this time,' said Acton.

'No doubt about it,' said Ray Danby.

'I should indeed be a brute if I did not go,' said Reginald, 'and as you are so kind, we will have a dance or two together.'

On arrival in the ballroom both Reginald

and Acton could not help looking for one woman alone. They had not long to wait, as Miss Lancelot, who was valsing with Foxhall Sharpe, came past them before they had been a minute in the room.

'There is Miss Lancelot,' said Mrs. Danby; 'does not she dance well?'

Mrs. Danby was right this time and no mistake, as it was acknowledged in all New York and Washington ballrooms that Lina Lancelot was far and away the best dancer in the country. She managed to stop close to them, and Mrs. Danby's observant eyes made a very shrewd guess at the situation as far as Miss Lancelot and Reginald Miller were concerned.

She was, however, considerably puzzled at Reginald's omitting to ask Lina to dance, and when a few minutes afterwards she herself was dancing with him, she proceeded (as ladies will sometimes do) to pump him.

'I should recommend you to secure a dance with Miss Lancelot as soon as you can,' said

she, 'or else you will find her card full, if it is not so already.'

'Oh! she knows such a lot of people here,' said Reginald, 'it is a hundred to one against her having one left.'

'I could have understood that speech better, Mr. Miller, if I had not danced with you, but this one turn that we have already had tells me that you are really fond of dancing, and that you dance very well indeed. Surely you do not mean to tell me that you consider yourself too old to still enjoy a dance with a good partner, on a good floor, accompanied by a really good band such as this is? I am quite sure that none of Miss Lancelot's partners can dance better than, if as well as, you do.'

Reginald, however, refused to be drawn, and Mrs. Danby, at the conclusion of their dance, told her husband that though a beautiful dancer, Mr. Miller was really the stupidest man in a ballroom that she had ever come across.

'I wonder what is up between him and Miss Lancelot,' said Ray Danby.

'Why ever should *you* say that, my dear? It is odd, for I have been puzzling my brain ever since I have been in this room on that very subject.'

'I will tell you why,' said Ray Danby. 'Palmer and I walked round the steeplechase course yesterday, and just as we crossed the course we came upon a drag on which was Miss Lancelot. She bowed to Miller—I had to draw his attention to the fact—and though she was most cordial in her greeting when we did go up to the coach, he was anything but in good form, and threw cold water on the idea of coming to this dance. When we left I asked him where he had met her, and he was so very short in his manner that I came to the conclusion that there had been a row between them. What do you think?'

'I think that she cares for him awfully; but I am completely puzzled. If I were not so sure that she cares for him I should think that he had proposed and been refused. I must ask Alfred when I get a chance.'

The author is sorry to say that poor Lina Lancelot not only had not her programme full, but that, just on the chance of Reginald asking her, she had kept many blank spaces on her card. The author also feels quite sure that the ladies who may honour him by reading this book are at this moment perfectly furious with Reginald Miller for being so blind; but you see, my dear ladies, he is a man, only a poor stupid man, and consequently in affairs of this sort just as blind as the proverbial bat. He was very miserable though—not that he does not deserve to be so from the ladies' point of view—but then you see he really thought she did not care a bit for him, and bearing in mind what Alfred Acton had told him on the night they landed, and after he had just received his own *congé*, he felt quite sure that the citadel had been successfully stormed by another. Somehow or other it never entered his head to think that it was within the bounds of possibility that *he* could by any chance be that other for whom she had confessed to

Alfred that she did care. As the evening wore on he found the situation becoming more and more unbearable, and telling Alfred Acton on the quiet that he should stroll back to the hotel, he betook himself thither.

Acton danced with Lina Lancelot on two occasions, and each time thought her more delightful than the last. He had, however, schooled himself to accept the position which she assigned him; and though it was very hard, he felt that he would rather have just a little crumb than no bread at all. And what of Lina Lancelot? As dance succeeded dance and he never came to ask for even one, she, poor girl, was indeed to be pitied; her pride, however, came to the rescue, and she danced and laughed with greater apparent zest than any of her partners had ever before seen. It was quite as well for Reginald Miller that he did go home when he did, as, had he stayed any longer and asked for a dance then, he would have received what the ladies will all say was his deserts, namely, a real good snub.

On the following day Independent arrived sound and well, and on Saturday morning Reginald rode him a two-mile gallop over the hurdles. The horse behaved as well as his most sanguine admirers could wish, and both Acton and Ray Danby were delighted with him.

'I hear that Foxy Sharpe means to make all the running and cut you down,' said Ray, as they sat at breakfast at the Shoreham. 'My opinion is that he will cut himself down instead, as I am quite sure that this horse stays.'

'Well, of course we really cannot tell without having something alongside him,' said Reginald. 'But he feels like staying, and he was catching hold all the way, especially at the finish.'

'I had the watch on you,' said Ray Danby, 'and you did the two miles in four minutes twelve seconds—a fair nice exercise gallop. If you can do it in four minutes and four seconds with the weight up on Monday, it will be a good performance.'

'What a fuss you chaps make about time in this country,' said Reginald.

'So would you if you lived here, my dear fellow. I have seen several horses sold simply because they have broken such and such time with such and such a weight up. Remember, we have not the variety of courses here that you have in England, and so time is reliable; and in England time is acknowledged as the best test for running and cycling. In fact they are as keen about record breaking there as we are here.'

'That is quite true,' said Alfred. 'We run our races so differently though in England, that it would be useless to rely on the time test. Look at half the steeplechases—hunters' races especially. I remember once riding a grey mare that I had, a beautiful hunter, quick as lightning at her fences, but could not stay a little bit. I was riding her in a hunters' race at Usseter; all the other chaps that rode in the race were either young farmers or people who knew very little about racing. Their idea was

to let something make the running quite irrespective of what pace it was made at. Well, I took my mare to the front before we had gone a quarter of a mile, and I cantered the whole journey till two fences from home. I declare I did not go twelve miles an hour, but they were quite content to wait on me. When I got so far on the journey I shook her up and let her go best pace home. She took them clean off their legs and won anyhow.'

'I hope you will get this horse home all right,' said Ray Danby. 'I am sure he will win you many a good chase, and as he is a maiden over a country, I should advise you to run him in the Grand National Hunt Steeplechase. You will have all the season to school him with your own hounds, and I venture to prophesy that he will be just about your favourite horse by the time cub-hunting is over.'

If the number of coaches and carriages that were to be seen wending their way to the race-course on the eventful Monday afforded any criterion, it might fairly be said that the match

was an event of absorbing interest in the sporting world of Washington. The ladies, dear things, took the greatest interest in it. Our readers will quite agree with us that no more need be said as to the success of the affair from a society point of view. Right royal was the weather, as fine as it always is when our gracious Sovereign honours any gathering whatsoever. The betting was decidedly in favour of Mogul, and his admirers had to lay two to one on him at the fall of the flag. Foxhall Sharpe, who rode the favourite, took him to the front immediately the flag fell. Reginald Miller lay two lengths behind for about three-quarters of a mile, and then, finding that Independent was going quite as fast as he liked, took a still stronger pull, and a mile from home was quite ten lengths behind. At the half-mile post he found, however, that Mogul began to come back to him most unmistakably, and waiting on him till two distances from home, he closed, and coming away, he won with consummate ease by three lengths.

'I thought you were beat, old man,' were Ray Danby's first words. 'I thought you were beat before you had gone a mile.'

'So I was, at least I could not go any faster. The horse was short of a gallop or two, but the pull I took saved him, and the other horse settled himself as dead as a stone half a mile from home.'

'By Jove! Reggie,' said Acton, 'you have set one young lady up in gloves for the rest of her natural life.'

'Who is that?' said Reginald.

'Why, Miss Lancelot. I heard her take a hundred pairs to fifty from Foxy Sharpe as he rode down to the post, and I hear that she has taken all the bets that she could get.'

'Congratulate you, Mr. Miller,' said Foxhall Sharpe, as Reginald stepped out of the scales. 'I thought I had you settled before we had got half way.'

'So you had, if you could have gone that pace all the way,' said Reginald; 'but you settled yourself first.'

'It was a very fast-run race,' said Ray Danby. 'I took the time, four, four and a quarter.'

'Are you sure?' said Sharpe.

'Quite sure.'

'Then, Mr. Miller, allow me to say, if he is for sale that I shall be very happy to give you two thousand dollars for your horse.'

'Many thanks,' said Reginald. 'But my friend Mr. Acton owns half of the horse, and if he will agree to it, I am most anxious to take him to England.'

'That indeed I will,' said Acton. 'We mean to win some steeplechases with him at home, Mr. Sharpe.'

'Quite right, Mr. Acton; you have got a good horse. I should think he is a nice horse to ride, isn't he?' turning to Reginald.

'That he is, indeed, and he jumps a bit quicker than Mogul, I think.'

'No doubt about it; he did all through. Of course I took no notice of the two last

hurdles, because Mogul was beat, and a beaten horse must dwell.'

'That's true; but what a big place a beaten horse can lob over if you only give him time and don't bustle him too much. I know I would sooner ride at the biggest fence that ever was seen, than ride a really beaten horse at a gap; they always chance it, and come down bang a-top of you.'

On the following day the Auburn party returned home in high feather. The result of the match was highly satisfactory, as Reginald Miller had won two thousand nine hundred and fifty dollars, Acton one thousand five hundred dollars, and Ray Danby one thousand two hundred. A day or two after their return to Auburn, Ray Danby and Reginald Miller drove over to Alder, a charming place in Loudoun county where Henry Fairfield, a great friend of Ray Danby, lived. Here they stopped three or four days, and picked up some nice horses. While they were away Alfred Acton and Mrs. Danby gave the flying Maryland but

little rest, as she drove about to all the nice places in the neighbourhood.

'By the way, Alfred,' said she, on one of these occasions, 'have Mr. Miller and Miss Lancelot quarrelled?'

'Not that I know of,' said he. 'Why?'

'Because both Ray and I thought that he was very short and reserved when she was there; he noticed it when they met on the course, I could not help doing so at the ball the other night.'

'Now listen to me, Mary, my dear. When first we met you told me that I looked worried, and I said I would tell you some day all about it. Here goes. We saw a great deal of Miss Lancelot on the passage, as Reginald, she, and I all sat together at the captain's table. We were capital friends before we had been two days at sea. We both fell in love with her, though I was much harder hit than Reginald. In fact, she was so delightfully kind, and seemed to like being with me so much, that I actually proposed to her in New York

the night that we landed, and she refused me.'

'Poor dear fellow. And what about Mr. Miller? He did not propose, did he?'

'No, he did not. In fact they did not seem to hit it half as well as she and I did the last three or four days of the passage, and when Mrs. Lancelot invited us both to dine at her house in New York the evening we landed, he declined. I went and got refused for my pains.'

'You are quite sure that he never asked her to marry him.'

'Certainly; besides, it would have been no good if he had, as she is in love with another man.'

'How do you know?

'Because she told me. I actually dared to ask if there was no hope for me even in the remote future, for I would wait ten years for her rather than not get her, but she told me so plainly that it could never be, that I had to acquiesce in the inevitable. In fact, although it

was evidently great pain to tell me so, she did tell me that her heart was another's.'

'She did not tell you whose, I suppose?'

'Well, no, not quite; but I am quite certain that poor old Reginald has not a million to one chance. Why, he was not in it even with me, and I was nowhere when it came to racing.'

'There you go again; you are as bad as you used to be in old days. What a rage old Lady Spinna was in with you when her son had had just one glass more port than was conducive to steadiness, and began to wobble about all over the place as he entered the drawing-room. She cornered him, blew him up sky high, and you, meaning to do your best for him, told her she must run him at one or two quiet little meetings till he got used to the crowd and run him on a left-handed course with a pricker on, and be very careful not to outclass him. I shall never forget it. Her late lamented had made his money in bobbins, which he found easier to handle than his h's; she

took it as a personal insult, and did not forgive you for ages.'

'I remember, of course; that was the chap that we always used to say had hunted and cricketed himself into society. But joking apart, I really think that Reginald Miller is quite out of the betting as regards Miss Lancelot.'

'I am not sure of that by any means, though you have seen so much more of them together than I have, that you ought certainly to know more about it than I possibly can; but you men are so easily laid on to the wrong line. I sincerely hope you will not say a word about this conversation to Mr. Miller, as he will think it an unwarrantable piece of impertinence on my part to discuss his affairs.'

'My dear, that I certainly shall not dream of doing; and if you knew him as well as I do, you would be quite sure that I should never think of doing so.'

'When does your steamer leave Baltimore?'

'On Thursday—this day week.'

'Oh dear, how quickly your visit has passed; how I wish it was three weeks ago.'

The next day Ray Danby and Reginald Miller returned with the four horses that they had bought near Alder, and a very nice lot they were too. Two hunters and a pair of 15.3 harness horses, each of which could trot his mile in two minutes fifty-five seconds.

'Did you see many nice horses while you were away?' said Acton, after the new purchases had been inspected and vetted.

'If we had bought all that we saw, we should have had at least one hundred,' answered Reginald. 'As we were riding along the road the evening we got to Alder, to look at this pair, a man passed and looked very hard at us. Two or three minutes afterwards we heard him galloping up behind us. He drew up alongside me, and said, "Say, are you the Englishmen that are knocking around buying up horses?" I told him that we were prepared to buy any really nice horses if we could get them worth

the money. He said, "Well, see here, if you can come to Salem on Friday morning, I reckon I can show you a splendid lot of horses, elegant high-headed horses." As Salem was almost on the way here, Fairfield said that we might as well call there. We did so, and arrived there at five this morning. Salem is a village consisting of one long, narrow street, like all the other villages about here, with a wooden sidewalk on each side of the road. As we drove in, it became evident that every horse within ten miles had been brought in to be shown to us. Both sides of the road were lined with horses hitched to the palings. Every man who had brought a horse expected us to buy, and was quite offended if we did not at least ride it. If we did so, and said the horse did not suit us, they promptly said, "What are his points that don't suit you?" They would then proceed to recount the numerous virtues possessed by the horse. I was very nearly let in, though, by the very identical chap that got us to go to Salem.'

'How was that? Did he try to stick you with a screw?'

'It was like this. He showed me quite a nice fourteen stone horse: he asked me to ride him over some rails. I did. He fenced beautifully, his legs and feet were of the best; in fact he was all a nice horse, six years old, but his teeth were frightfully worn. He had a fair six-year-old mouth by his corner teeth, but his front ones were worn down terribly. I asked him if he was a crib-biter; he looked a mixture of puzzled and innocent, and said, "Never heard of no crib-bitin'. What is that?" I explained it, and he said, "No, I reckon they don't never do that in America." I then asked him the price. "Two hundred dollars," said he. I bid him one hundred dollars, but he said that one hundred and seventy-five was the lowest he would take. I got on again and had another ride; he was a real nice horse to ride. However, the owner stuck to one hundred and seventy-five dollars. I bid him one hundred and twenty-five, but not an inch would he

budge. A happy thought struck me, so I jumped on again, cantered off up the street, turned down a lane by the side of the hotel (there is nothing less than an hotel in America). I jumped off at the stables, took the horse in, pulled off the bridle, went out and shut the door, and put my eye to the keyhole. Just as I expected, I had hardly time to close the door before he caught fair hold. I heard it plainly. I went in again, put his bridle on, and rode him back to where my friend was standing. He evidently had quite made up his mind that I meant to have the horse. "Well, stranger, I reckon you will give me the one hundred and seventy dollars now." "No, thank you," said I, "he won't suit me." "Say, what are his points you don't like?" "He is a crib-biter, as I thought he was at first." "How do you know?" I told him what I had done; he was not the least angry or disappointed, he just looked at me for a minute and then said, "What'll you take?" He introduced me to two or three of the leading people of that part

of the country, and took care to tell them that I was a wonderful judge of a horse.'

'Ah!' said Ray Danby, 'that is one thing I do like about these people; they are always willing to acknowledge the existence of superior talent in another.'

On the following Sunday morning they started at seven o'clock to ride to Baltimore, a distance of about sixty-six miles. Unfortunately, after they had got about seven miles on the journey, a chestnut horse cast a fore-shoe; this horse was only delivered at Auburn the night before, and the man from whom he had been bought had promised to have him shod all round before delivery. This he did not do. Ray Danby, however, who was of course with them, said that there was a blacksmith at Gainsville, eight miles on, and felt sure that though it was Sunday he would in a case of emergency shoe a horse. On arrival at Gainsville they found that the blacksmith, a gentleman of colour, was to preach at the chapel two or three hundred yards up the road,

and had just gone there. Thither Reginald followed him, and as service had not begun found him in the porch. He explained what he wanted, but the blacksmith said it was impossible, as he had to preach a sermon, and besides, it was 'de Blessed Sabbath.'

'Well, look here,' said Reginald; 'I have to ship these horses from Baltimore to England on Wednesday and I must have this horse shod; he can't travel on these roads without a shoe on; I will give you five dollars if you will come and shoe him.'

'Here, Brudder Tapssott, I reckon you will hab to do de preachin' to-day. I's got portent bisness at de house,' and with that he made tracks for the forge at a grand pace.

After an uneventful journey they reached Baltimore on the Tuesday morning, having slept at a small place eight miles out on Monday night.

Having safely stabled the horses at Redseller's capital stables, Ray Danby, Reginald,

and Acton went down to the docks to inspect the 'Russia' and to see that the boxes were all right for the horses. They found that they had been put up on the main deck, five on the port and five on the starboard side. They consisted of long narrow stalls, padded in front and behind and at the sides. They were, of course, too narrow to permit of the horses lying down, and as all practical horsemen know, a horse can travel without lying down for many weeks if necessary (for instance, Ingomar by Uncas from Wild Deer, who won the Croydon Hurdle Race, was sent to New Zealand in the 'British King.' The author saw him land, and though for forty-three days he had never once lain down, his legs were as fine as silk). On Wednesday the horses were safely shipped, and on Thursday morning at daybreak the 'Russia' steamed out of the harbour. Fifteen days afterwards they arrived at Avonmouth, having had a marvellously smooth passage. The horses did well most of the voyage, though they were a bit off their feed occasionally; however, as you

cannot keep horses' blood too cool on board ship, they were none the worse for that.

Behold, then, Reginald, Acton, and the horses safely landed at Avonmouth.

'You go and pay the duty on the tobacco, old man, will you, while I get the horses boxed? Fortunately there is a siding within one hundred yards.'

Acton went to the Customs, saw the chief official there, who asked him into his private rooms.

'I am exceedingly sorry,' said he, 'to be obliged to tell you that you have brought more tobacco than is allowable, and that much as I should like to pass it through, I really dare not do so.'

'Good gracious!' said Acton, 'do you mean to say that we have to forfeit twenty-six pounds of this beautiful tobacco.'

'The regulations are most strict and very distinct; ten pounds is the maximum amount that a private individual can bring. If he is willing to pay a fine, he may bring as much as

twenty, but no more, unless he is a tobacco merchant, or becomes one *pro tem.* by bringing eighty pounds. If, however, you will allow me to make a suggestion, strictly, of course, *sub rosa*, I would advise you go back to the ship and bring some fellow passenger, who can claim, in my presence, say about ten pounds of it; he must take it away with him though, and if he is not honest, he might stick to it, as you could not say that it was not his.'

'Oh, I can soon settle that,' said Acton. 'I will be back in ten minutes and bring him with me.'

He went aboard again and found Green, who had come over in charge of two hundred head of cattle, and who, as soon as he found what was wanted, went with him to the Customs and claimed ten pounds of the tobacco. Acton presented the Custom-house officer with a pound of it, much to that individual's delight.

Meanwhile Reginald Miller was busy getting the horses boxed, no easy task, as some of them objected strongly. Independent would not have

it at all, at any price, for a long time; ultimately, however, he was blindfolded, and pushed bodily in.

'Now then let us telegraph to Purlby; he is expecting to hear every day, and I should think Mark Whitwell & Co. sent him a wire yesterday when we passed the Lizard.'

After lunching on board, and bidding adieu to the officers, engineers, &c., they got into the horse-boxes and started for Bristol, *en route* for Brewtown, where they arrived at 8.30 in the evening. Purlby and one of the helpers were there to meet them, the former in a state of intense excitement.

'Well, how are the hounds?' said Reginald. 'I got your letter about poor Caroline; that was a bad business.'

'It was indeed, sir, but I have saved five of the pups, and they are all as like old Marquis as can be. We have got a rare lot this time, and as to the entry, I don't think we have ever had such a lot.'

'Is most of the corn in?'

'Very near all, sir. In fact, we can begin cubbing as soon as you like.'

'Horses all right?'

'All except old Lockington, sir; he may carry Jack through the season, but you must not think of riding him. I have had him in the river every day for the last six weeks.'

'Ah, I fear I settled him that day when we had the clinking gallop from Ramsden Park. The ground was like iron.'

'The firing shows very little, sir, now, though you remember how deep Mr. Ault scored him with the irons.'

By this time the horses were all unboxed, and in a few minutes were saddled, and all was ready for the start. Reginald rode Independent and led the four-year-old. Acton rode Vermont and led Warrenton, and Purlby and the helper followed with the others. It was a lovely moonlight night, and they both agreed that it was much pleasanter to ride the fifteen miles than to sleep at Brewtown and train home

in the morning. They rode into the stable-yard just as the clock struck twelve.

'Home once more,' said Reginald, as he jumped off, 'and uncommonly glad I am to get here.'

The sound of the horses' feet brought half-a-dozen helpers out like rabbits with a ferret at them.

'I have got the far boxes ready for them, sir,' said Purlby; 'they will just hold them.'

Having seen the travellers comfortably ensconced in their snug quarters, and having given orders that all their shoes should be taken off first thing next morning, and that they should be turned out in a field close to, with plenty of grass, water, and shade, Reginald and Acton started across the park for the house.

'Well, that is all right,' said the former; 'they have landed all safe and sound at home. But I wish with all my heart that we had never started at all.'

'I don't,' said Acton; 'if we never had gone

I should never have met the most glorious creature in the world.'

'Now, my dear Alfred, don't mention that subject. Once for all, please, remember that we agreed to taboo it.'

'I know we did, and I won't mention it again if I can possibly help it; but when a woman is always in your thoughts, it is very hard to prevent speaking of her.'

'I manage to, at all events,' said Reginald.

'I grant that you do, but then you never proposed to her; you did not see half so much of her the latter part of the passage as I did.'

'For Heaven's sake let us talk of something else,' said Reginald, now fairly out of temper. By this time luckily they had almost reached the house, and in another second Reginald was receiving the caresses of Lion and Brenda, his two mastiffs, who, nearly mad with joy at their master's return, were leaping up, and barking and whining with delight.

'Gently there, old man; steady, old girl,' for-

getting for the moment all else but the pleasure of seeing his faithful dogs again.

Ay. 'faithful;' find if you can a word more fitting, or that more exactly expresses what you want. It would be a poor world without horses and dogs; but passionately fond as we are of horses, and delightful companions as they are, they are as friends much inferior to dogs. I think they are as forgiving, but they have nothing like the intelligence of dogs. Horses are quite happy in the society of their equine brethren; but the dog alone, of all the brute creation, yearns for the society of man. He was created by Providence to be man's trusty friend and companion. One thing is quite certain. For our part we cannot imagine a future state of perfect bliss unless in that state we have horses and dogs, especially the latter; however, we shall all know all about it some day, and goodness knows how soon it may be.

CHAPTER VI

FIRST BLOOD

THE next morning was spent by Reginald in kennel, the greater part being occupied by a critical inspection of the young entry, and after grave deliberations he decided to have two or three days' cubbing before he drafted a single one.

'I do not see why we should not begin cubbing the day after to-morrow; do you, Purlby?'

'No, sir, I don't. We had a lot of rain the beginning of the week, all the corn is cut about Foxton, and the General said he would be very glad if we would go and rattle the cubs about; they have got three litters there this year, sir.'

'Very well; then I will ride over this afternoon and see if it suits them for us to come on Saturday. Monday is the first of September. By the bye, I must have a chat with Turner about the birds.'

'Him and me is very big folks now, sir,' said Purlby; 'and he says it has been a capital breeding season.'

'By the way, what do you think of the new lot of horses?'

'Well, sir, I think they are nice ones—nice breedy 'osses I call them; but you could have got them in England just as good.'

'Certainly I could, but what should I have had to pay for them here?'

'Well, there's two or three that looks like a hundred and fifty and two hundred apiece.'

'Ah, that is where the pull comes in; there is only one horse amongst the lot that I gave as much as fifty pounds for. However, I don't wish you to mention anything about the price to anybody. I think that two of them can win steeplechases, and I mean to have a

shot at the Grand National Hunt with the bright bay horse I rode home last night.'

'They seem to be goodish doers, sir,' said Purlby: 'they all ate up last night and this morning. You should have seen them when I turned them out; they were all over the place. Davis says he never saw such a good-footed lot in his life.'

'Well, these American horses really are the soundest lot I have ever seen. The roads there, though, are very different to ours in England. There are no hard roads to knock their legs to pieces, and although very nice in summer, they are almost impassable in the winter months until covered with snow. McAdam was never heard of out there.'

In the afternoon the two friends rode over to Foxton, where General and Mrs. Going lived.

'Ah! how are you, Miller? How are you, Acton? Safe back from your wanderings, eh? I hope you have come to stay dinner; never mind your clothes.'

'Well, General, we have come to ask if it is

convenient for me to bring the hounds here the day after to-morrow.'

'Pray do, my dear fellow. We have a lot of cubs, and Charlie is very keen to have them bustled about a bit—the Carr is chock full of them.'

'I wonder what is the matter with Mr. Miller,' said Mrs. Going to her spouse, after Reginald and Acton had gone that night. 'He seems ten years older; he has lost his high spirits entirely.'

'Yes, I noticed it,' said the General, 'but he is as nice as ever. I wish there were more like him.'

At half-past four on Saturday morning Reginald was at kennels ready to start for Foxton.

'Let them out,' said he, as he sat on his horse close to the kennel-door. Out they tumbled, one atop of the other, quite wild with joy. Bonnybell came with a run and nearly landed on to his thigh; old Monarch could not refrain from a deep wow, wow. There is

nothing in the world much more delightful to a sportsman who is really fond of it, than trotting to the meet with his hounds all round him. For one who studies them, there is a wonderful lot of character in hounds; some want a lot of encouragement, others must be gently chidden. The young hounds of an inquiring turn of mind insist on investigating the interior of every garden and house they pass on the road, if they possibly can get away unobserved; others delight in rushing into the midst of a lot of fowls, simply for mischief. 'Ware wing, steady there! have a care!' and a crack of the lash from the whipper-in brings them back clustering all round your horse. Ourselves, we believe in giving hounds a certain amount of liberty on the way to the meet; they are all the better and steadier for it when they get there.

An hour's trot brought them to Foxton, where half-a-dozen of the neighbouring sportsmen met them. A move was at once made for

the Carr, and ere hounds had been five minutes in covert, they found.

Yonder he goes across the ride. Too, Too, Too! Huic, Huic, Huic! and in less than half a minute hounds are across too, and running hard in covert. All of a sudden, dead silence.

'They must have overrun it,' said Acton to Miss Going, who was riding alongside him.

'What is that?' said she; 'there he goes back again about a hundred yards down.'

Acton promptly holloaed and Reginald emerged. Tally-ho Buick, Tally-ho Buick, Eleu Buick! Crack, crack, crack went Purlby's whip, and hounds were at him again. This time he headed straight for the outside of the covert, and breaking, set his head across the park, but only for a hundred yards; his heart then failed him, and turning short back, he was met by his enemies who were pouring out of covert, just as he made for the fence. In much less time than it takes to write, all was over, and Reginald dismounting proceeded to divest him of his brush and pads. Then came the blooding

of the young hounds. There is no doubt that fox is to them quite as much an acquired taste as are olives to us, and if a young hound could speak, he would tell us that it was not because he liked it that he ate it, but because it seemed to be the proper thing to do, and also because if he had not eaten it, other hounds would have. Back again into covert they went, and quickly found again. This cub was a bolder young gentleman than his brother, and gallantly breaking, gave them a pretty little spin of seven minutes, being eventually run into on the bank of the pool. Yet another cub paid the penalty, and the sun now being high in the heavens, and scent completely failing, home was the word.

CHAPTER VII

CROSS-COUNTRY QUESTIONS

THE next week was devoted to cub-hunting and partridge-shooting. Three brace more cubs were brought to hand, and capital bags were made. Reginald had given orders that all the new horses were to be shod ready for schooling on the Monday, which day he had determined to devote to their first lessons in jumping. Independent, Vermont, and Warrenton were already goodish fencers, but none of the others knew their business as yet. There were several nice fences where he always schooled his horses, and these had been put into thorough repair. As he always first lounged his young ones over, there were rails running at right angles to the fences for ten yards on the take-off side of each

fence. Taking the (lounging) rein himself, he led each horse in turn up to the first fence, which was nothing more than a very strong plain hurdle laid flat on the ground. If the youngster popped over it, all right. It was raised about a foot from the ground, and so on, gradually raised till that part of the education was considered complete. Supports on the landing side prevented the hurdle from being knocked down, however hard it was hit, as Reginald's motto was to make a horse dread to take the smallest liberty with any fence whatever. Some of them were evidently natural jumpers, and popped over as if they had been at it all their lives. One or two, however, showed a lot of temper, and the whips were brought into play pretty freely. After the hurdle, there was an open ditch about six feet wide; next was a low thorn fence without any ditch, not more than three feet high, but with a solid oak rail on the landing side quite close to the fence and almost flush with the top of it. Two or three tried to take a liberty with this, and were

consequently turned over; they never, however, repeated the performance, and it was quite ludicrous to see how big they jumped the next time.

'There,' said Reginald, after these three fences had been more or less satisfactorily negotiated; 'now I will give myself a treat and have a ride on Independent.'

In addition to the before-mentioned fences, there were two or three fair flying fences with ditches either on the take-off or landing side, a biggish post-and-rail, and a double with just room enough to pop in and out, the first fence being lower than the second.

'I meant you to have put the big bridle with the shifting port and long cheek on,' said Reginald, as he got up. 'This horse catches hold like blazes. Never mind changing it now, but in future always put that bridle on him.'

Independent set his back up and squealed as Reginald turned him round and set him going at the first fence; he jumped it beautifully, however, and made no mistake whatever at any

of the fences, taking off yards in front, and landing as many the other side of each fence. Reginald steadied him a lot as he rode at the double, but when within twenty yards of it the horse caught fair hold, and raced at it as hard as he could lay legs to ground. Reginald had the sense to know that he could not possibly stop him, and so trusting to Providence, he simply sat still. Fast as he was going, the horse just collected himself sufficiently, and taking off exactly in the right place, he swung clear over both fences, landing yards the other side.

'By Jove, you are a clinker and no mistake,' said Reginald, as he pulled him up and walked back. 'What do you think of that, Purlby?'

'Never seed a 'oss jump like it in my life, sir, and such form as he gallops in too; if he ain't a steeplechase 'oss, I ain't seed one afore. Talk about jumping like a rainbow! And he's away the quickest as ever I seed.'

'I think I will have Vermont out now; the bay horse, you know. Put a big fat plain snaffle on him.'

Vermont, too, behaved to perfection with the exception that he got a bit too near the second fence of the double, and hit it so hard that he landed on to his head. His good shoulders, however, saved an actual fall, and they picked themselves up again without parting company. The next time he made no mistake.

'There,' said Reginald, 'I think that is a pretty good morning's work.'

As he drove Acton to the station that afternoon, the latter asked him what he proposed to do with the horses.

'We will see how they shape, and if they are as good as I think, I will sell some of mine with the cub-hunters, and keep most of these through the season. We must certainly run Independent and Warrenton. When you come back you had better pick two or three and ride them through the season. We can sell the lot at Warner, Sheppard, and Wade's in the spring, or else summer them and sell later on.'

'All right; you will have made them all by

November, and I can't manage to come to you till then.'

Time rolled on. The Mendale accounted for twenty-three brace of cubs. The country became fit to ride; two or three early frosts carpeted the roads with leaves and cleared the ditches. Already they had had two or three really fine gallops, and in one instance an old dog had given them an eight-mile point and saved his brush by getting to ground just within the boundaries of the East Stamford country. Reginald would have given a hundred pounds to dig him, but that of course could not be, as there is no breach of etiquette so unpardonable as that.

The 'Bredford Mercury' of Wednesday the 27th contained the following, under the heading 'Hunting Appointments':—

The Mendale hounds will meet as follows:

Monday, Nov. 1 .	Westbury Wood
Tuesday . . .	Blythbank
Thursday . . .	Radbrook
Saturday . . .	Cream Cheese Hill

With what joy were the fixtures scanned by the hunting folk, and how one and all looked forward to once more meeting the Mendale hounds at the time-honoured fixture, Westbury.

'Tis the first of November, the opening day;
At Sudbury Coppice they've met:
There's a scent in the cover, the knowing ones say;
There's a fox for a fiver, I'll bet.
But it's Tally-ho, forrard away—
His line is for Potter's I'll lay:
If you're game for a lark,
There are pales in the park
Take a good lot of jumping, they say.

And that is just what did happen. There *was* a scent in the cover. In fact, as people rode to the meet, they really felt that they might for once venture to prophesy that there would be a scent. Those who have hunted hounds, or ever watched them carefully for some seasons, will have noticed the difference in their behaviour on a good or bad scenting day. On the former, they dash into covert, as much as to say, 'There's not a second to be lost;' On the latter they go listlessly to work, as if they thought, 'Well, if

we do find we can't run him a yard.' In the present instance, fortunately, the former was the case, and though they had drawn three-fourths of the covert before a sound was heard, the crash of music which suddenly burst from the pack proclaimed that they had not only found, but that he had evidently been unkennelled in view. He was within five yards of the covert fence, on the outside of which was a deep ditch: into this he jumped and made the best of his way up it to the end of the covert, where he broke and set his head straight for Foxley Gorse, some two miles off. Hounds (as they always do when they get their heads up) ran half across the field from covert, and ere they could be picked up and brought to the line the fox had got at least half a mile start. Reginald, who was hunting them himself, was riding Independent, who was now his favourite horse. No sooner did hounds cross his line than they set to work to run like blazes, as though they were tied to him. A bit of a fence, a grass field, and then came the road. The gate was the most

negotiable place, and as Reginald knew he could trust Independent at timber, he steadied him, and he jumped it beautifully; out of the lane through a hairy place where he lost his cap, but the pace was much too good to stop for it. Acton, who was a good horseman, followed Reginald over the gate into the road, and out again into the next field. Hounds were positively running away from them, and even those who were galloping along a road parallel to the line could hardly hold their own. Reginald could just live with them, that was all; the flyers of the hunt were struggling along, doing all they knew to keep on terms. Crash went the fences right and left in his rear, and already mother earth had received several salutations. On they ran, and now Foxley Gorse was within a field of them.

'Did you view him, Gadby?' yelled Reginald, as he galloped past a farmer whom he knew well.

'A's bin gone about a minute and a 'arf, Mester Miller. It's a great big woindin' dog

fox. A turned oop ter t' roight 'and when a saad ma.'

Here came a momentary check, as hounds carried it right up to the fence and threw their heads up. Reginald, however, with one note of his horn, quickly had them on the line again, and they set to, to run as hard as ever. This slight check, however, gave the first flight an opportunity to get on better terms. Into the road raced hounds, and out again, and then swinging sharp to the left, like a troop of cavalry wheeling at the gallop, they headed straight for Foxley Brook. Reginald knew that it was a nasty rotten-banked one, and as he also knew of a ford a couple of hundred yards to the right, and hounds were heading that way, he galloped for it. Here was a chance for the front rank to get on still better terms, so sitting down and putting on all steam, six of them charged it. One got over, three got in, and two stopped on the other side. On still went hounds, the field growing more and more select, and for ten minutes more Reginald literally had hounds to himself.

'Tally-ho!' shouted a ploughman, whose team bolted up the furrow best pace the moment that they heard hounds running the other side of the fence.

'Do you view him?' said Reginald.

'Yes, sir, a's joost gone across the adlant (headland).'

One more big grass field, and as hounds scramble through the next fence, up go their heads. One or two of the fastest race away from the body of the pack. The gallant quarry hears them coming closer, closer; now he half turns and snaps viciously at the leading hound, but ere he can crawl another yard he is no more. As Reginald lands over the fence, he sees them pull him down. At the same moment Berkeley, one of the thrusters who safely negotiated the brook, tumbled head over heels into the field.

'You found he had plenty of pace, didn't you?' said Acton, as the two friends rode home that afternoon.

'Pace, my dear fellow; he hardly went out

of a good exercise gallop, and was pulling right up to the finish.'

'I think he is too good to hunt,' said Acton; 'there is no telling how good he is.'

'Well, now, I don't agree with you there at all. Surely, to be really brilliantly carried bang to the tail of hounds in such a gallop as we had to-day is as good as winning any steeplechase in the world; better, I think.'

'I can't go so far as that,' said Acton. 'Fond as I am of a gallop, I do like it between the flags.'

'That is just the difference between you and me. I ride to hunt, and you hunt to ride. Why, I can enjoy a run of three hours, even if hounds don't go any faster than you can kick your hat. That is, if I am hunting them myself.'

'Yes, I suppose you are right. I like hounds, but suppose it is really only because they furnish me with the excuse to gallop and jump over other people's land and fences. However, if there were no differences of opinion there would be no fancy waistcoats.'

'True for you,' answered Reginald. 'But, joking apart, if you really are anxious that I should keep this horse in lavender for a big steeplechase, I will. He is as much yours as mine.'

'My dear fellow, hunt him fairly bang through the season, or at all events until the first of March; that will give him six weeks to the Grand National Hunt, and I know you want to win that with him. Besides, if you do break him down or lame him, it can't be helped, and we are neither of us paupers.'

'All right, old man, I will; but I will always ride him first horse, and give him every chance. He would not owe us anything if he cracked to-morrow though, would he?'

'No, by Jove. What duffers we were not to pile it on; we could have won another one thousand dollars, easy.'

'A thousand! Ah, more like five thousand. They were beggars to gamble in Virginia, weren't they?'

Here a big sigh was simultaneously heaved

by each man, and not another word was uttered by either until they rode into the kennel-yard. We need not tell our readers the why and the wherefore of this sudden cessation of conversation: the mere mention of Virginia, the home of Miss Lancelot, was enough to throw a cloud over them both.

'By the way,' said Acton, about two hours later, when, having tubbed and got into smoking-suits, they were discussing tea and the papers in the smoking-room, 'you shoot on Friday, don't you?'

'Yes; I expect Turner will be here directly to see me about it.'

A very few minutes after, the butler announced that Turner wished to see his master.

'Tell him to come in,' said Reginald.

'Well, Turner,' said he, as that worthy entered the room, 'have you made all your arrangements for Friday?'

'Oi anna, sir, boy goy!'

'Oh, how's that? You haven't much time.

You will have to be about all Thursday. You know there are generally a good lot of foot people when we meet here.'

'Where shall you draw, sir?'

'Oh, the Beech Wood, of course. There is little fear of his running through any of the coverts we shall shoot, and if he does the stuff will all be back again in two hours. But how is it that you haven't made your arrangements?'

'Well, we're so nation short o' beaters. That theer hartis' chap as yer 'ad daown last year, he shot 'um up so close oi dunna know what for t' dew. A isna comin' this toime, is a?'

'No, no, of course not; but I don't think it was as bad as you say last year.'

'Ah, but it wor; 'arf the beaters was pickin' out shot corns for a thraa wik, to say nothink abaout old Sambo. A landed '*im* twoice. And them as a didna sheoot, a welly skarred to death. Bur if you're quoite seure as a isna coomin' this toime, oi can appen get enooff.'

'Gad, he's a rum one,' said Acton, as the

door closed on Turner's burly form. 'What a splendid lingo he talks too, doesn't he?'

'Yes, I shall be awfully sorry when it dies out, as I suppose it will in time. But you should go up into the high country, amongst the stone walls, to hear it to perfection. I was staying in the neighbourhood at one time and Turner's brother had a farm near, so I rode over to see him. As I rode into the farm he was standing by the gate. "Well, oi'll be dalled," said he, throwing his cap down into the dirt, and slapping his thigh—"well, oi'll be dalled if it isn't Mester Reginald. Oh dear, oh dear, bur oi am glad for t' saa yer. Are yer oongry?" Well, I had ridden fifteen miles, and I can tell you that air gives one an appetite, so I answered in the affirmative. "Well, get off and coom in. What do yer think a cock pheazand did t'other dee? Whoy, a ackshally flew into moy wife's bedreoom, beggar his owd legs on 'im. So oi sent word to t' squoire and axed what I mun' dew wa 'im, and a sends me an answer back as oi mun kaap

'im; so oi very seoon puts him under a croost, fer oi thowt as 'ow theer moight baa soome back orders, and if you'll come inter t' ouse wa'll mek that theer poy sit oop."

'That is a first-rate story,' said Acton; 'that was just like Turner's brother.'

'Yes, wasn't it? I heard him make a speech at the Rostewell Agricultural show, or the "Kultchul" Show, as they call it. He was eulogising the master of the "Low Torr" hounds, the finest pack of harriers in England' —in fact they are in the opinion of the writer absolutely undefeated—'and by Gad their country is perfect. Well, he was cracking up the master, who is a splendid fellow. In the course of his speech he said, "What oi say of Highfield" (of course, he pronounced it "Oighfaald") "is, if a breks a geete a'll pey for't. Oi av bur wun faut to foind wi Oighfaald—a braads 'is aounds so fast yer canna catchum." Oh, by the way, did I ever tell you what Turner, this man here, said to my mother one day?'

'I don't remember' said Acton.

'She was complaining how few swarms of bees she had one year, and was talking to Mrs. Turner. Turner happened to overhear her, and popping his head in at the door, he said, "You'll hexcuse ma, mum, but oi can tell yer the raason as you anna got mooch 'oney this year. It's a thisuns; yo saan theere's tew many wopses about. They're allus on at the baas." "What?" said my mother, "can a wasp beat a bee?" "Can a wops baat a baa?" said Turner. "Whoy, 'oin saan a wops boite a baa i' tew i' t' middle and floy aweey with t' teel end on it, oi an, boy goy."

CHAPTER VIII

G.N.H. AND ANOTHER

TIME, as per usual, especially in the hunting season, rolled on a great deal too fast to please our enthusiastic master of hounds. This year more than ever he disliked the contemplation of the fact that the season was on its last legs. As long as he could hunt and shoot six days out of the seven, and so divert his thoughts from Lina Lancelot, he managed to get along somehow. But he dreaded the time when he should hang up his horn, and bid adieu to the joys of the chase for so many months. 'Post equitem sedet atra cura,' and in Reginald's case it sat so far behind, was in fact so completely at the tail of affairs, when he was hunting his beloved hounds, that for all he cared it might have been miles behind.

Tired out with a real hard day in the saddle, he slept sound, and though many a time and oft he dreamt of his love, still he did manage to keep her to a certain extent in the background all through the hunting season. He knew, however, too well that as soon as that was over, and time began to hang heavy on his hands—he knew that then his thoughts would revert only too surely to her. Distraction of some sort he must have, and so he made up his mind to go in heavily for racing—a dangerous game enough for a poor man who would go in recklessly for backing his horses; but as in this instance Reginald had a rent-roll of fifteen thousand a year besides valuable collieries, and was moreover no fool, he could afford to spend a few thousands over that most fascinating of sports. He had had for two or three years a small string in training at Mollerton. and only last year had been so fortunate as to own one of the best two-year-olds in training. In fact he had one colt in his stable, who, if he would only put his best leg foremost in public would

have been undoubtedly the champion two-year-old of the year. On the occasion of his *début* at Epsom he won the Woodcote Stakes in a common canter, and in consequence started a red-hot favourite for the New Stakes at Ascot. He did as well as horse could do in the interim, and the race was booked a foregone conclusion for him. But after three parts of the journey was traversed he cut it most unmistakably and refused to gallop, and was beaten by his own stable companion who was started to make running for him and who finished third. Reginald thought he might be amiss, and tried him again at home the following week. The result confirmed the previous trial so thoroughly that Reginald and his trainer felt certain the colt must be amiss. They pulled him out again for the Ham Stakes at Goodwood, which race was won by his stable companion, who met one or two of the penalised flyers and running very gamely just struggled home a short head to the good after a desperate finish. The favourite was again nowhere. Another trial at

home convinced his connections that he was an arrant rogue, and after giving him one more chance in the Gimcrack Stakes at York with the same result, Reginald was so sick of him that he told his trainer to sell him.

Now, there are always a lot of clever people connected with the Turf, who think they can do more with a horse than those in whose hands the horse may happen to be, and this was no exception to the rule. A couple of bookmakers who did not bear the best of reputations, but who were remarkably shrewd men and who were acquainted with Reginald's trainer, offered a price for the horse, and he was immediately transferred to their stable, about six miles off. Meanwhile Reginald's other two-year-old kept gradually improving, and was quoted all through the winter months at twenty-five to one for the Derby.

Independent had been in regular training since the first of March, and both Reginald and Acton thought that he would run a very good horse in the Grand National Hunt. The meet-

ing this year was held at Bredford, which made Reginald more than ever anxious to win, as all the sporting farmers, &c., who hunted with the Mendale had pinned their faith to Independent, especially as 't' squoire were goin' to roide hisself,' as they put it.

It so happened that the Mendaleshire Yeomanry were out for their annual training that very week, and that their inspection was held on the racecourse the day before the National Hunt Meeting. Reginald commanded the Radbrook troop, and a very fine lot of yeomen they were: they all belonged to the estate, and, as Reginald was very keen, he had the smartest troop in the regiment. The various troops used to march from their several districts, and the regiment assembled in a large field three miles outside Bredford, whence they marched to the racecourse. Bredford always turned out *en masse* to see the 'calvary,' as they called them, march through. The small boys, of course, used to chaff the sturdy yeomen

unmercifully, and invariably called them the buttermilk soldiers. The quartermaster of Reginald's troop was an enormously fat man, and on this occasion the lads were as usual shouting out, 'Leuk at th' buttermilk soldiers, leuk yer at th' buttermilk soldiers,' when one smart lad, espying the quartermaster, shouted out, 'Boy goy, lads, 'ere's t' churn hisself.' Roars of laughter followed this sally, and the name, as may be imagined, stuck to the unfortunate quartermaster ever after.

Davis the blacksmith was the troop farrier, and though an excellent farrier, he did not shine as a cavalry soldier: in fact he was never quite sure which way to turn when the command was 'Fours right,' or 'left,' as the case might be. On one occasion Reginald remonstrated with him quietly, after he had invariably wheeled his horse to the left when the word was 'Fours right,' and *vice versâ*. 'Well, squoire,' said he, leaning confidentially forward in his saddle, and respectfully saluting with his hand, as though he were on foot, 'it's loike

this, yer see. It didna coom duown to t' trainin' last year, and a's forgot it!'

A week's steady work, however, used to do wonders, not only for Farrier Davis, but for the whole regiment, and on this occasion the Radbrook troop again won the prize as the smartest troop. They had particularly distinguished themselves in pursuing practice, and all they now wanted was for 't' squoire' to win the 'Grand Natural,' as some of them called it. Many of them who had never dreamt before of such a thing as betting, had dipped deep into the stocking, and meant to put the money down in earnest on the morrow. Certain it was that, if Independent did not win, it would bother some of the Radbrook tenants to find the wherewithal at the ensuing rent-day, which was now drawing very near.

Reginald Miller had tried Independent with a really good horse that had just won a big race, and he felt very sanguine indeed of success. Several horses came with great reputations, as, indeed, from the conditions of the race was but

natural. In two or three instances powerful stables were represented, and a horse called Tittlebat, from Captain Mitchell's stable, was reported to be able to smother the Grand National winner at a stone. Reports of phenomenal trials were rife, and if half what was said of several of the competitors was true, the race was all over bar the proverbial all right, 'Omne ignotum pro magnifico,' and as many of the runners had never won twenty sovereigns over a country, the above quotation was in this instance particularly applicable.

On arriving on the course Reginald found that Tittlebat was established a firm favourite. The prestige of the stable which had turned out no less than three 'Grand National' winners in five years, coupled with the reports of his trial, amply sufficed to place him at the head of the poll. Then the Clive Hill representative was backed, and well backed, by his party, who professed to fear nothing. Vittoria, a grand-looking chestnut mare, hailing from Marton in the Mud and trained by that excellent and successful

trainer Wheeler, was another stray tip. Independent having been imported from America was not thought so much of as he otherwise would have been, for there is no doubt that we do think we can lick the world at steeplechasing; and so we can too, but there is no earthly reason why we should not import from Kentucky and Virginia horses that can show a bold front both in the hunting field and between the flags. Reginald, however, found that he could get twelve fifties about his horse, and this he was content to take.

It is needless to say that the Radbrook tenants with their wives and daughters were there to a man, and many were the market carts that were drawn up on the opposite side of the course close to the rails. Sixteen horses faced the starter, who got them away well at the second attempt. Reginald knew that Independent could both stay and go fast, so getting well away he jumped the first fence alongside Tittlebat and Vittoria. He had hardly landed, however, when Rattrap came

sailing past him intent on fulfilling his mission of making running for his stable companion. This he did to some tune, as before the first mile had been covered he held a lead of twenty lengths. Reginald sat still watching Tittlebat, Vittoria, and two others which were all going well. He had not seen the fracas which occurred at the first fence, whereby some half-dozen horses got inextricably mixed up in consequence of the refusal of two of the number.

This half-dozen, for any chance they now possessed, might as well have remained in their stable. Independent was going strong and well, and pulling so hard that Reginald let him out a little before another half-mile was traversed. He had got within a couple of lengths of Rattrap, Tittlebat and Vittoria were three or four lengths behind him. All of a sudden, when within two strides of a big fence with a yawning ditch on the landing side, Rattrap refused and came round bang in front of Independent. It was too late to do anything but trust to

Providence. Independent stopped as if he had been shot for a second, and then tried to jump the fence; he got over, but landed short and fell, Vittoria and Tittlebat sailed over side by side, and a couple more followed suit. Reginald was up and away as soon as possible, but he felt that his chance of victory was a forlorn one, as the two leaders were now at least one hundred yards to the good. He had too much sense, however, to bustle his horse, who luckily did not seem a bit the worse for his fall. Before he had gone two fields he had passed all but the two leaders, but found that he gained but little on them. On they went, each jockey riding to orders, namely to cut the other down, making the pace a fearful cracker, and Reginald felt that unless they came to grief his chance of victory was indeed remote. They raced at the last fence neck and neck, but as they rose each horse swerved from distress. They collided and fell neck and heels into the next field. Reginald now crammed on all speed. Just as he rose at the fence, the rider of Tittlebat, who had remounted, set his

horse going, but Reginald had too much way on for him, and landing a length behind him, he shot past him, and won amidst great cheering by two lengths, with a bit to spare. As Reginald turned round to ride back to the paddock, he found himself surrounded by his tenants, who fairly mobbed both horse and man, and who signified their intention of carrying him on their shoulders, and it was as much as Purlby could do to prevent them from lifting their master bodily out of the saddle. In fact it was not till Reginald Miller explained to his fat quartermaster that he would be disqualified unless he rode the horse right up to the weighing-room and there dismounted, that he prevailed upon them to desist. As may be imagined great excitement reigned in the paddock, and on all sides you heard such remarks as, 'Thundering hard lines for Mitchell—his horse would have come clean away on the flat;' 'Not he—Vittoria would have buried him for pace at the finish.'

'Well,' piped an excitable little book-

maker who had laid all the others and kept Tittlebat to run for him, 'I'll back Tittlebat to lose Independent at any distance from two miles to six.'

'You will have an opportunity of doing so to-morrow,' said Reginald, who was at that moment passing from the weighing to the dressing room. 'They will meet to-morrow in the Hunters' Race, and my horse puts up a penalty.'

'I will bet you a level monkey he beats yours, sir—best of one, two, three.'

'Done!' said Reginald. 'We will give each other a run of course. My present intention is to run my horse. It is just possible, however, that Tittlebat may be none the better for his fall.'

'Of course, sir,' responded the bookmaker. 'Both to start—best of one, two, three, for five hundred pounds. Now look here, sir,' said he, taking Reginald on one side, 'I know all about this Tittlebat; I backed him for the Captain. He is not well enough to be here, but I shall

send him a long telegram in cipher and I have no doubt I shall have instructions to back him for all I can get on to-morrow. Take my advice, sir, and don't back your horse against him.'

'I am very much obliged to you,' said Reginald, 'very much, but I believe my horse to be a real good one. I am not sorry, however, that to-morrow's race is three miles instead of four, as I have the penalty to put up.'

'That is in your favour, certainly, sir.'

'By the way,' said Acton, as they drove home to Radbrook that evening, 'did it occur to you at all that Rattrap was pulled round on purpose to baulk your horse?'

'No,' said Reginald, 'it never for a moment occurred to me!'

'You are such an unsuspicious chap, you don't believe there is such a thing as roping in the world; but I feel quite positive in my own mind that that horse was pulled round on purpose. Besides, Wadding never even attempted to set him going again; he just turned

round and trotted back home through the gates. He has been suspended twice, mind you, in his time, and has sailed uncommon close to the wind several times.'

'At all events I will be on the look-out to-morrow. But I think I shall wait on Tittlebat.'

'Little Spratt has a tremendous opinion of him. I told you what he said after he laid you the monkey.'

'Yes! Can you spare me half the bet?'

'Of course.'

'Right.'

As they drove through the park, they overtook Purlby, leading Independent, who kept breaking into an amble and shaking his head, as fresh as a daisy after his gallop.

'None the worse, evidently, Purlby,' said Reginald as they passed.

'All the better, sir; he will run a better horse to-morrow if you don't let that there Rattrap knock you over again.'

'Purlby evidently thinks as you do, old man,' said he to Acton.

'Want to back your horse, sir?' said Charlie Herbert, one of the largest bookmakers in the Midlands, to Reginald as he crossed the paddock the next day.

'What is his price?' he said.

'Five to one, sir.'

'What's favourite?'

'Tittlebat, sir; two to one.'

'That's a short price surely,' said Reginald.

'It is, sir, but Mr. Spratt seems to have an unlimited commission to back him. I laid him four hundred, and he has backed him with everyone in the ring. And then you see the horse comes from the Captain's stable, and he don't make mistakes.'

'You are quite right there,' said Reginald, 'but from what I could see Vittoria jumped as quick and went as fast yesterday. Besides, in a race with conditions such as these are, we none of us can know anything about the opposition. It is not like a handicap, in which a lot of well-known horses are engaged.'

'That's true, sir, and I must say that I

don't see why he should be any better favourite than Vittoria or your horse either; he made up a good bit of his ground before the others fell.'

'Do you know how many runners there are, Mr. Herbert?'

'Ten, I think, sir.'

'Does Rattrap run?'

'I should think he is sure to, on purpose to put you down again, especially as you have a penalty up. Wadding was very much disgusted at the horse's refusing yesterday, says that he never in all his life knew him to do so before, and says he will gallop and jump till further orders all by himself at home; and declares that, though Tittlebat is the best at four miles, there is very little to choose between them at three.'

'Thanks, Mr. Herbert; you may put me down five hundred.'

'Very well, sir. I think it will be a great race between you and the other two, bar accidents, though I should back you without your penalty.'

Reginald now felt quite sure that Rattrap had been stopped the day before, and determined not to be caught again.

The betting grew fast and furious at last; Tittlebat still headed the poll, and there was but little to choose between Independent and Vittoria. The ten runners got away to a capital start, Rattrap at once going to the front. Independent seemed to make very light of his penalty, and pulled harder than Reginald had ever known him before. In fact it was all he could do to steady him at his first two or three fences. Do what he would he had to lie second, and he saw that Tittlebat and Vittoria intended to repeat yesterday's tactics and watch each other. Reginald, however, was very wary, and watched Rattrap most carefully. When some eight or ten lengths from the third fence, he saw Wadding look over his shoulder for an instant and then set his horse going at the fence, it flashed through Reginald's mind at once that he looked to see if he was near enough, and finding that he was not, deferred his little

game *pro tem.* He repeated the same tactics at the next fence, and when half-way across the next field, he pulled Rattrap back alongside Independent.

'My horse can't go any faster,' said he to Reginald. 'How are you going?'

'All right' was all Reginald vouchsafed, but he was all on the *qui vive*, and feeling quite sure that Wadding was up to some hanky-panky tricks, it suddenly flashed across him that he meant to jostle him; so when about sixty yards from the next fence he shook Independent up, and just touched him with the spur. The horse shot out and raced at the next fence as hard as he could, landing a tremendous distance into the next field. Just as he settled into his stride again, he heard an almighty crash, and head over heels came Rattrap and his rider. Wadding had simply bustled the horse clean off his legs in the hope of catching and upsetting Reginald, for that was his little game. Reginald now took a strong pull at his horse; he was just at the bottom of the hill, and was five or

six lengths in front of Tittlebat and Vittoria. It was quite time to take a pull too, as the first mile and a half of the journey had been run at a capital pace. Tittlebat and Vittoria, by the time the top of the hill was reached, had got on terms with Independent, and they all cleared the fence abreast. Reginald by this time felt quite sure that he could go as fast as or a bit faster than either of them, and taking a pull he let them lead him three lengths for the rest of the journey until two fields from home, when he gradually began to get on terms. They all three rose at the last fence together, and of the three Vittoria was a shade the quickest away. Then ensued a terrific race. Reginald was on the right-hand side of the course, having come up outside the other two at the last fence; on they came neck and neck, the jockeys of Tittlebat and Vittoria both at work with their whips, Reginald riding his horse all he knew with his hands. Three strides from the winning-post he picked up his whip and hit him once. Independent answered as game as a pebble, and got his head in front.

Tittlebat and Vittoria ran a dead heat. Thus ended one of the grandest steeplechases that had ever been witnessed. The papers next day were full of the masterly way in which Reginald had timed his finish.

'I am afraid Wadding is very badly hurt,' said Acton to Reginald, as he rode into the paddock. 'They say he has concussion of the brain and two ribs broken. They are going to take him to the Infirmary. Serve the beggar right, though, if it had killed him. I saw his little game through my glasses as plain as a pikestaff.'

'Come, come, Alfred, we can afford to be generous now. Whatever he may have intended the poor chap has come off badly enough in all conscience, if he is as bad as you say.'

'Right you are; precious few fellows are like you, though. What a ripping race you rode! You can lick your old master now. Do you remember when I began to teach you on little Dandy, the chestnut pony? You were always a capital hand at getting away, but you always

would come too soon, and you used to have your flail at work before half the journey was over.'

'Yes. What a wonderful pony that little beggar was! I have ridden him twenty quarter-mile heats in a day, and he was always game to have another go.'

CHAPTER IX

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE

NEXT day Reginald drove into Bredford to inquire how Wadding was, and was told that he had recovered consciousness early that morning and had particularly expressed a wish to see him, but that if he would kindly call again on the following day they hoped that the patient would be in a fit state to converse.

'What do you think of his case?' queried Reginald.

'We don't know what his internal injuries are; he seems to be in a great deal of pain at present, independently of his broken ribs. As far as the concussion is concerned I think he will be all right; he is an abstemious man, and naturally in excellent condition.'

On the following day Reginald again called

at the Infirmary, and was shown into the ward where Wadding lay.

'It is very kind of you to come to see me, Mr. Miller. I want to tell you something, for if I am to die I shall die the happier if I confess something; I pulled Rattrap round on the first day, and I meant to do so again the day before yesterday, but found you were too fly for me, so I meant to knock you over at that fence I fell at. Can you forgive me, sir?'

'Of course I can, and will,' said Reginald, taking his hand; 'but I sincerely hope this will be a lesson to you for the future. You might have been killed yourself, and if you had killed me, well, to say the least of it, you would not have been a very happy man in the future.'

'That's just it, sir! I never saw it in that light; thought it was all right. But this has opened my eyes. Think that I might have been a murderer.'

'Let us thank God it is no worse. I am quite sure you mean what you say. Now you

must not talk any more; as soon as you are fit to be removed you shall come to Radbrook and be nursed. Now not a word,' as he saw Wadding about to say something, 'not a single syllable shall you utter. I will be over again in a day or two to see how you get on—till then, good-bye.'

As the door closed on him Wadding fairly broke down and cried like a child. 'Well,' said he, as he gradually calmed himself down, 'if that ain't what the sky pilot at home used to call heaping coals of fire on a man's head, I don't know what is.'

Alfred Acton went up to town by the night train the evening of Independent's second victory, and on arrival at his chambers in the Albany found several letters, amongst them one with the Auburn postmark on it. Letting the others wait, he opened his sister's, for she was his correspondent. We, who are privileged, beg to inform the reader that had she or he been in our position, the said she or he would have quite lost patience ere their curiosity was

satisfied. First he read it once, then he said, 'Bless my soul,' then he raced madly up and down the room, then he read it again, then he threw himself into the recesses of his biggest arm-chair, from which after more 'Bless my souls' he emerged, only to read the letter a third time. However, we won't keep the reader anything like as long in suspense as he kept us, but will proceed to give the letter *in extenso*. It was as follows :—

'AUBURN : Thursday, April 10.

'Dearest Alfred,—I always told you what idiots you men were where woman was concerned, and I really think you get worse and worse year by year, or is it that we get cleverer and see your inanities more plainly? Anyhow, you and Mr. Miller have made the most lovely mess of it that I ever saw. So there! (What the deuce have we done now?) You remember that you told me that you proposed to Miss Lancelot the night you landed at New York, and that she refused you, and you also told me

that Mr. Miller had not the faintest shadow of a chance in that quarter, or, to use your own words, had not a thousand-to-one chance. Now, my dearest Alfred, I am, as I was when you told me, awfully sorry that she refused *you*, as I have never seen a woman that I would have so loved to call sister, but it seems to me that as you can't get her for yourself, the next best thing will be that you should help Mr. Miller to get her, for marry her he can, I am quite positive. I told you one day when we were driving together out here, that I believed she was in love with him, and since you went home I have proved it. We have seen a great deal of both Mrs. and Miss Lancelot since you were here, and last week they came to stay here for a few days. I noticed that if ever Mr. Miller's name was mentioned she became perfectly crimson; I also caught her drawing him from the big photograph that he sent Ray directly he got home—I mean the one in hunting things. Mrs. Lancelot tells me that Lina has never been the same girl since she came back from Europe,

and she is very much distressed. Lina has become frightfully absent—in fact, though here in the flesh, she is in the spirit wherever Mr. Miller may happen to be. Now, dear old Alfred, manage the whole affair; just try for once in your life if you can't do something clever. I know your heart is good enough and big enough, and I am also quite sure that the fact of having been refused by Miss Lancelot yourself will not make you do one whit less towards the accomplishment of my pet scheme. In fact, make Miss Lancelot marry Reginald Miller. Ray and the children send love. The latter told me Lina Lancelot was always talking about Mr. Miller when she was by herself with them.

'Ever your affectionate sister,

'MARY.'

'By the way, Mrs. Lancelot says that she thinks of sailing for England very soon.'

'Of course I'll do all I can to get her married to Reginald,' said Acton, when at last

he did find his tongue, which was not till the conclusion of the various evolutions aforesaid. 'Of course I will, but how am I to set about it? —that's what beats me. If Mrs. Lancelot will only come home and bring Miss Lancelot with her, it will be easy enough, but how the deuce I am to do it unless she does, I don't know. Happy thought! I'll send Mary a wire.' This he did as follows: 'Wire immediately you know name of ship and day of sailing.' 'Send that telegram first thing to-morrow morning, please;' this to the servant who answered the bell. 'Let me see,' soliloquised he, 'Reginald comes up on Monday, and I go down to Newmarket with him to the Guineas. I shall have lots of opportunities to discuss the matter with him.'

Monday came, and with it Reginald Miller. The two friends dined together at the club, and after Independent and his victories and all their surroundings had been talked to death, Alfred Acton tried to broach the subject which ever since the night of his sister's letter had been

nearest his heart. If he had rehearsed it once he had done so one thousand times, and now that the moment had actually arrived he found it almost impossible to come up to the starting-post. Over and over again he tried to join his horses, but each time he let Reginald start some topic of conversation. At last it became so patent to Reginald that there was something on Alfred Acton's mind, that he said, 'Well, what is it? You have been hanging about one tiny little bit of gorse for at least an hour, and seem frightened to draw it. Now blaze away; you want to say something. I sha'n't eat you, dear boy, and, as you know, there is but one topic on which we have agreed to maintain a discreet silence.'

This was Acton's cue. 'Yes, I know that, but what I want to talk about now is the very subject that, as you say, we agreed to taboo. It is of Miss Lancelot I want to speak, and, what's more, I must and will, once for all. If you tell me to shut up for ever after you have heard what I have got to tell you, I promise

you the subject shall never again pass my lips; but I mean to have my innings this time, and I'll bet a hundred you will thank me from the bottom of your heart before we have done. First and foremost, read that.'

Then he handed Mrs. Danby's letter to Reginald, who read it once, twice, three times, but never a word said he till he had quite finished, and then, as he handed it back to Alfred Acton, he said, 'Impossible! too good to be true; your sister must be mistaken.'

'That I swear she is *not*,' said Acton. I never yet knew Mary make half a mistake in a case of this sort, and besides, it is all as plain as a pikestaff to me now. When I proposed to her and she refused me, I had the cheek to ask her if her heart was her own, and she told me it wasn't, and I now feel sure the reason it wasn't her own was because you had got it.'

'Well, but how can that be?' said Reginald. 'You remember how jolly you and she and I were the first three or four days of the passage?'

'Of course I do; and then, somehow, the latter half of it you and she seemed to drift apart, and didn't appear to be half such pals towards the finish.'

'That's true enough; she was always making some confounded excuse or another to get away if she and I happened to be alone together. She was all right if you and I were both there, but directly we were left alone she either wanted to find those blessed children, or the captain, or somebody. So I naturally thought she did not mean to have anything to say to me, but by Gad, Alfred, I will tell you now I loved her before we had been two days on board, and I love her now, and I shall never be happy till I get her.'

'*A la* Pears' soap, eh? However, as that is an absolute impossibility for me, I mean to do the next best thing, and get her for you. I have quite made up my mind that it is far better to have her for a pal than never to see her again.'

'That is just the difference between you

and me,' said Reginald. 'I will be either absolutely first, or nowhere. Now look here, Alfred, I am off to Virginia again on chance.'

'Don't do that, my lad; didn't you read Mary's postscript?'

'Yes, I did of course; but she says Mrs. Lancelot is thinking of sailing for England very soon. That isn't good enough for me.'

'Well, hang it all, wait for a few days till I have had time for an answer to my telegram.'

'What telegram?'

'I telegraphed to my sister, asking her to wire the name of the ship by which they sail and the date of her departure.'

'All right then, I will wait a few days. But I won't wait long—I can't.'

'You won't have to wait long, I am quite sure of that. My sister would never have written as she has unless she had been quite certain of her ground. She knows that Lina Lancelot is yours, and she is quite sure that she and her mother are on the eve of their departure for

England. Promise me at all events that you will wait one week before you start for America.'

'All right, I will promise you; but I swear that I will not wait one single hour longer.'

They went to Newmarket on Tuesday, and Reginald Miller had the satisfaction there of seeing a horse of his win the Trial Plate. His three-year-old, which had been quoted all through the winter at twenty-five to one for the Derby, was not entered for the Two Thousand, and it was just as well that he wasn't, as his trainer, who met him in the Birdcage, told him that the horse had on the previous day met with a nasty accident. As his boy was walking him home after he had done his work, a thunderstorm broke, and a terrific flash of lightning so terrified the horse that he bolted when within two hundred yards of his stable, slipped up on turning into the yard at full gallop, and cut himself about badly.

'It will take us all our time to get him ready for the Derby, sir, I fear,' said the trainer,

'and however well he goes on, he won't be fit to go out of a walk for a fortnight.'

Reginald Miller went down to Yorkshire next day, and found that his Derby horse was decidedly the worse for his accident, as, though tendons, ligaments, *et hoc genus omne* were all right, the horse was terribly bruised and knocked about. There was no reason, however, that he should not be able to go along in a week or ten days. Though this *contretemps* of course militated considerably against his chance of winning the Derby, still he would at all events be able to face the starter.

How Reginald Miller existed during the next week was a mystery to himself. Each day seemed a year, the only redeeming feature being that each morning when he woke the first thought that sped through his brain was, 'One day nearer!'

After a fair passage the 'Carolina' dropped her anchor in the Mersey on the twelfth of May. Reginald, who had made arrangements with the Cunard Company, was apprised of the fact

at the earliest possible opportunity. Mrs. Lancelot and her daughter came up to town that night, and took up their residence at the Buckingham Palace Hotel, where they had ordered rooms before they left America. The very next day after they reached London, Reginald and Acton called upon them, and arrangements were made to go down the following day to Richmond, have an hour or two on the river, dine at the Star and Garter, and drive home. Some friends of the Lancelots' who had been fellow passengers with them from New York were invited also. At one o'clock the party started in a couple of carriages which had been hired for the occasion, and an hour's drive landed them at the doors of the Richmond Club, which is charmingly situated close to the river just above the bridge, and has delightful grounds sloping down to the river. Reginald was a member of this club, and here he entertained the whole party at luncheon. After a cup of *café noir* and a cigar, they started to row up as far as Teddington Lock.

'Will you entrust yourself to my pilotage, Miss Lancelot?' said he.

Now, if Acton or either of the other men had made her the same offer, she would most probably have cheerfully accepted, but, goodness knows why it was, yet it is an undoubted fact that she did not by any means jump at his offer. Her mother, however, opportunely came to the rescue and said, 'Well, my dear Lina, as you have but little faith in Mr. Miller as an oarsman I shall be only too delighted to avail myself of his kind offer, that is, if he will condescend to row an old woman up the river.'

'That, indeed, I shall be charmed to do,' said he; and as a matter of fact he spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as he there and then made up his mind to enlist Mrs. Lancelot's good offices on his side.

Suffice it to say that ere they had reached Teddington Lock Reginald had laid bare his heart to her, and in return had gained her consent to his trying his luck with her daughter;

and, said she, 'I don't wish to buoy you up with false hopes, but I am sure that Lina has lost her heart to someone, and as she has been a different girl ever since the day she landed at New York on her return from England, she either lost it in England, or on board the "Scythia" on the way back. However, you row her back to Richmond, and by the time you get there, you will at all events know the worst. Thank you for a delightful row, Mr. Miller,' as he handed her out of the boat at Teddington. As a matter of fact, Reginald Miller was a real good man in a boat, as he had been a Wet Bob at Eton, and had stroked the eight there.

'Well, Lina,' said her mother, as they were about to start on their return journey, 'you need have no fears as to Mr. Miller's rowing capabilities, and I should strongly advise you to let him row you home.'

'Perhaps he won't have me this time,' said she, 'as I didn't jump at his offer the first time.'

'I shall be delighted to row you back, Miss

Lancelot,' said he, 'and as your mother gives me such a good character, I really think you will not be afraid to trust yourself to my care.'

Now, the author has always been told that it is easier to row with the stream than against it. He begs, however, to inform his readers, male and female, gentle and stern, that this is altogether an erroneous idea. Were it not so, pray how could Reginald Miller row Mrs. Lancelot up against the stream in 45 minutes and yet take an hour and a half to row down again to Richmond with the stream? In future, therefore, please understand that it has been proved by a man who has stroked the Eton eight that it is far easier to row against the stream than with it. (This correspondence must now cease.—Editor of 'Hark Forrard.')

On arrival at the Star and Garter, Lina made straight for her mother's room, and the first peep at her face convinced Mrs. Lancelot that all was well.

'Now, you need not tell me a word about it, my dear,' said she, as Lina came and threw her

arms round her. 'I know exactly what you are going to say. Mr. Miller has proposed to you, and you have said yes.'

'Yes, mother dear, that is true, and I am so happy. Fancy, if you hadn't brought me home, I might never have seen him again, and I believe I should have died, for I do love him so.'

'My darling, do you think that I was so blind as not to see it all the time? That, and that alone, was my reason for bringing you home.'

After a capital dinner at the Star and Garter, the carriages came round, and in addition a hansom appeared on the scene. The result of ten seconds' confab between Reginald Miller and his intended mother-in-law was that he handed Lina Lancelot into the hansom, and jumped in himself.

'Which way will you go, sir?' said the cabman.

'Any way you like,' said he, and the author really believes that Reginald would have liked

to go round by Glasgow and Edinburgh, any way in fact that would take the longest possible time. The cabman, however, decided to drop down to Barnes, crossing the railway at the level crossing, then to Hammersmith, and over the bridge. In the midst of the tenderest of love passages, Reginald awoke to the fact that the horse was all over the place. They were within a hundred yards of the level crossing—a train was rapidly approaching. Reginald opened the trap at the top of the cab and told the cabman to stop the horse; he then jumped out and got to his head. The train came rattling past and the horse plunged badly, but Reginald held on to him, and after a minute or two the horse began to settle down. As Reginald got in, he cautioned the driver to be very careful and walk all the way rather than chance an accident.

'I never knowed him carry on like that afore, sir,' said the cabman. 'I don't know whatever is the matter with him.'

As those of our readers who have ever been

there are aware, after crossing the railway, you turn sharp to the right, and have about a mile of perfectly level good road, with a footway kerbstone and a high wall on the left-hand side. They had not gone a hundred yards before Reginald felt quite sure that the horse meant to get away if he could, as he kept making plunges to be off.

'All right sir,' said the cabby; 'I've got him.' But he hadn't, and hardly were the words out of his mouth before the horse gave one terrific plunge and bolted, heading for the fence on the right-hand side of the road. The driver just saved an upset by pulling the near rein hard, and as it was, the box of the off wheel grazed a lamp-post. In another couple of minutes the horse was galloping madly along the flagged footway, and the near wheel going g-r-r-r-r-r, against the wall. Cabby at last got him into the middle of the road, and then two hundred yards in front of them was the Inn. This was the terminus of the road, at right angles was the village, and at right angles to the left was the Hammersmith bridge. It now

became a question whether the driver could steer the horse at the breakneck pace at which he was going round the turn to the left. This, however, was safely accomplished.

Meanwhile, Reginald, though fully recognising the perilous position in which they were, kept as cool as a cucumber, and told Lina to sit perfectly still, and not speak. This the brave girl did. As they got on to Hammersmith Bridge, the driver looked through the hole and said. 'I'm done sir, I can't hold him any longer.' Reginald jumped up, threw open the doors, and standing on the front of the cab between the doors and the dashboard, collared the reins. He just cleared a heavy waggon by an inch, and then at the other end of the bridge saw two great furniture vans, one apparently coming and the other going. Reginald found that though still running madly away, he could steer the horse with the near rein; his mouth on the off side was perfectly dead.

As those who know Hammersmith Bridge are aware, there is a parapet, then a footway, then

another low parapet, at intervals in which are the suspension pillars. Reginald at once made up his mind that there was but one thing to do, and that was to run the horse into one of the suspension pillars, and chance the cab's being overturned by the parapet. He therefore steered him for the pillar, and about five yards off it, let his head go. The result was that the horse, who of course was *pro tem.* absolutely mad, charged wildly into the pillar and broke his neck on the spot. The cab was nearly, but not quite, turned over by the parapet, the cabby was chucked off on to his hands and knees, and escaped with the loss of a bit of skin and cut trousers. Reginald handed Lina out.

'My brave darling,' said he, 'how splendidly you behaved!'

'I knew I was safe with you,' was all she said, with such a look of love in her eyes that he with difficulty restrained himself from throwing his arms round her on the spot.

Isn't it wonderful, though, how implicitly

women believe in the man they love? They invest him with the most wondrous powers, with indomitable courage, with chivalry and heroism unequalled; and what humbugs a lot of us are too, when all is said and done. Unfortunately, after matrimony, many a time and oft, comes the rude awakening, and they find out that we are not only mortal, but very mortal at that, and poorish things after all.

As is always the case on these occasions, a policeman was quickly on the spot, accompanied by three or four other foot passengers, and after giving the policeman his card, and telling the cabman to come and see him the following morning, Reginald popped Lina's arm into his, and walked to a cabstand a hundred yards the other side of the bridge.

CHAPTER X

EPSOM AND BACK—ESPECIALLY BACK

Now that we have got Reginald Miller and his future wife safely back to London, we can imagine some of our readers saying, 'Bother the man, he might have told us how Reginald proposed to her, and what she said.' But as the same old question has been asked many millions of times in every inhabited portion of the globe, and has been so accurately and graphically described by so many abler pens than ours, we have decided to leave each reader to imagine it for her or himself. He has proposed and he has been accepted, and how he did it won't interest any of you one hundredth part as much as it did them. So there!

Reginald continued to get the most satis-

factory accounts from his trainer as to Fortitude's well being, and in ten days from the date of his accident he was able to begin slow work again. The week before the Derby he persuaded Mrs. Lancelot to come down to Radbrook, as he was anxious to show Lina her future home. Mother and daughter were both charmed with the place, and all the neighbouring families who came to call were most hearty in their congratulations. Turner, the keeper, whom of course Reginald made a point of presenting to Lina, was fairly dumbfounded, and stood with his mouth wide open for a long time. When he did at last find his tongue, he said, 'Boy goy, mester, I allus wor boog o' Radbreuke, bur naow, oh dear, oi'm th' boogest as iver I wor.'

'What did he mean, Reggie?' said Lina when they had left Turner. 'I couldn't understand a word he said.'

'I am not surprised at that; he talks the most delicious broad Derbyshire that ever was heard. He simply meant to say that he had

always been very proud of Radbrook, but the fact of my being about to marry you made him quite the proudest man in the world.'

On the Friday before the Derby, Reginald went down to Mollerton to see Fortitude do a gallop, and to ensure a true run race the trainer had a real good one with twenty-one pounds the best of the weights, to bring him along the first mile, and a very speedy one to finish the last half-mile. As it happened, there is at Mollerton a mile and a half more like the Derby course than perhaps any other that exists throughout the length and breadth of England. Fortitude ran a good horse, but was beaten a couple of lengths at the finish, as the last two hundred yards up hill told against him.

'Just what I expected,' said the trainer. 'If we could only put the Derby off a fortnight, I shouldn't fear any of them.'

'Yes,' said Reginald, 'he is short of half-a-dozen gallops, no doubt; but I have got Bowman to ride him, as Lord Liskeard's horse is scratched.'

'I am glad to hear that, sir, very, and I quite expect to see him run a good horse, though it is too much to expect him to quite win.'

'Doncaster is the course of all others that I think suits this horse,' said Reginald, 'and if we get beaten in the Derby, I will have a big try to win the Leger.'

'Yes, sir, that is just his course, and if he improves at the same rate he did last year, he will be very bad to beat at Doncaster.'

A heavy thunderstorm on the Tuesday night just laid the dust to perfection, and made the road really in good order for the drive, and Reginald, who was a member of the Coaching Club, drove Mrs. Lancelot, Lina, Acton, and some other friends down to the Derby. There were fifteen runners for the big race, and Davenport was favourite, though Fortitude, despite his having been stopped in his work, looked so well and moved so beautifully in his canter, that the best price to be got at the fall of the flag was six to one. Bowman, who rode

him, waited handy till he got to the top of the hill. Rounding Tattenham Corner, Bowman shot bang up to the leaders, cutting in between Falcon and the rails. (As all who knew him are aware, he was a wonder round Tattenham Corner, and has been known to come round it best pace with his left leg over the rails.) Down the hill they came a cracker, and Bowman really thought he was going to win, but at the bell the condition told, and he was passed by Destiny and Tudor, who ran a desperate race home, Destiny winning by a head, Moonstone beaten half a length for second place. Fortitude finished fourth, as directly he saw that he could not possibly win, Bowman stopped riding, knowing that Reginald had no place money on the horse.

'Well, Bowman, I am not the least bit disappointed,' said Reginald; 'he has run quite as well as could be expected under the circumstances.'

'I thought I was going to win, sir, till very near home,' said Bowman; 'but if you keep this

horse for the Leger, I am sure he will win if he keeps well. I have not forgotten my ride on him at Doncaster last year.'

'Well, he is in the Prince of Wales' Stakes at Ascot on Tuesday week. I am half inclined to run him there?'

'Please yourself, sir. I should keep him for the Leger and win a big stake. The extra two furlongs is bound to tell on him in the Prince of Wales' Stakes in his present condition, and Tudor, who ran second to-day, is a better horse over a flat course like Ascot than he is down this hill from Tattenham Corner; his shoulders are a trifle heavy, and he is a little bit straight in the pasterns. He would have won to-day if he had come down the hill as well as Destiny did.'

'Ah! well, I shall let you know by Saturday whether I shall want you for Ascot. By the way, will you come across to my coach, and have a bit of luncheon?'

'It must be a very little, then, sir, as I have

got to ride in the next race but one, and I can only just do the weight.'

Reginald introduced Bowman to Lina Lancelot, and she was charmed with his quiet, gentlemanly manner. Amongst others who had accepted Reginald's invitation to come down in the coach was an old gentleman called Draycot, who had been a very fine whip in days gone by, and he expressed a great wish to handle the ribbons on the return journey. This he did, and despite the crush and crowd, all went well until they got as far as Cheam. Here part of a culvert had given way and it was consequently very narrow indeed. Mr. Draycot had pulled the horses into a slow trot in order to give the carriage in front time to cross the culvert, when a two-wheeled shay driven by a perfect specimen of the East End ruffian, accompanied by five other kindred spirits, each a perfect Bill Sikes, tried to cut in on the wrong side. In less time than it takes to write it, the near fore wheel sent them flying. A similar kind of conveyance, in fact

a 'sister ship' freighted with an equally charming cargo, narrowly escaped sharing the same fate.

'Spring your leaders now,' shouted Reginald as the occupants of the first trap picked themselves up, and, accompanied by their friends in the other, rushed at the coach; 'gallop! gallop!' But before Draycot could get steam on, the roughs were on them, and had hold of the leaders.

'Come on now,' said Reginald. 'We have no time to lose.'

Down jumped everybody, and each singling out his man, there was a free fight. Reginald went straight for the biggest of the lot, who, relinquishing his hold on the leader's head, put up his hands, and led off with his left at Reginald's head. Reginald simply ducked, and before his adversary had time to recover himself, he put in both left and right, one, two, and knocked him clean off his pins under the leaders' feet. He had just time to steady himself when two hulking ruffians rushed him; he

landed one hard behind the ear, and he went down like a stone; he received a real crusher, though, from the other man which very nearly did for him, and so dazed him for the moment that he was content to act on the defensive. He found that his adversary was a foeman worthy of his steel. After one or two rapid exchanges, Reginald managed to counter his opponent heavily on the right eye, though he got a nasty one himself. He now tried the effect of a body blow, but this was neatly stopped, and had he not ducked his head well to the right as he delivered it, he would have got a terrible left-hander, which, however, whistled harmlessly over his left shoulder. He found his man, however, getting short of wind, so feinting with his left, he sent in his right like lightning, catching his foe just on the point and knocking him clean off his legs into a deep ditch overgrown with briers. Just as he did this, a brute hit him from behind across the back of the neck with a stick and knocked him over. He was up, however, like lightning, and

catching sight of his man, made for him; he caught him just as he was rounding the coach, and after a short tussle, wrenched his stick out of his hand; he showed this man no mercy, and belaboured him with his own stick till he knocked him completely out of time. Meanwhile, Acton, Charles Young, and the others had accounted very fairly for their men, and the gentlemen were absolutely the victors. They had by no means, however, gained a bloodless victory; Sutliff's claret was flowing freely. He was, however, 'sailor-like,' delighted with the fun, and quite sorry when it was over.

'Now then, boys,' said Reginald, 'jump up every one of you. I say,' said he, addressing his third opponent, who had picked himself out of the ditch and was mournfully rubbing his shin, 'how much damage have we done your cart? Let's look at it.' On inspection, the conclusion arrived at was that a couple of sovereigns would set it all straight again.

'Well,' says Acton, 'here's a fiver; two pounds for the cart and three for drinks.' And

so saying, he handed it to the man who owned the damaged cart.

'Three cheers for the swells!' shouted he. This was most heartily responded to by all the combatants, and harmony was quite restored.

'Well,' said the man whom Reginald had knocked into the ditch, 'I have scrapped a good bit in my time, and if I'd 'a' bin told as a lily-fingered cove like you could 'it like a 'oss kicking, I'd never 'a' believed it. No more fighting with you swells from the clubs. Who taught you, sir?'

'Ned Donnelly is my master, and all I know I owe to him.'

'Well, I know Mr. Donnelly, and next time as I see him I shall tell him as he's turned out one real good one at all events.'

The author is quite prepared to find that many of the readers of this book are now saying, 'Quite unnecessary! Shocking bad form to allow his hero, or indeed any characters in the book, to fight in the presence of ladies.'

But if any reader will kindly tell him the alternative that presents itself to his or her mental vision, the author will be only too glad to cry 'Capevi,' as dear old Jorrocks says. As everybody who has ever had to apply his muscular Christianity in a similar way is aware, it is absolutely necessary to hit hard, and that at once, in a case of the sort under notice. The East Ender, at no time a gentleman of much blandishment, is on an occasion of this sort a perfect demon, and nothing but an appeal to his better nature in the shape of a real good hiding can possibly be successful. Had Reginald Miller and his friends, 'who happened to be a particularly good lot,' been duffers, goodness knows whether the coach would not have been at Cheam at this moment. Certain it is that the very smallest sign of hesitation would have literally upset the apple-cart, and therefore the author is convinced that this was an occasion where the circumstances altered the case; and as all is well that ends well, and nothing succeeds like success, and the winning

horse gets patted in the paddock, he does not consider that the smallest apology is due from him. Besides, this story is true, and 'Magna est veritas et prevalebit.'

On the following Saturday Reginald received a letter from his trainer, telling him that Fortitude had been coughing since his return from Epsom, and also was suffering from cracked heels. This quite decided Reginald not to run the horse at Ascot, but to keep him for the Leger, for which race he backed him at Tattersall's, on the Monday after the Derby, in thousands, at eight to one.

Wadding, who got so knocked about in the Grand National Hunters' Steeplechase, had now been staying at Radbrook for the last three weeks, and had become very much enamoured of Turner's daughter, a comely Mendaleshire lass of nineteen summers. He asked Turner if he would allow him to pay his addresses to her; but Turner, who had heard rumours that Reginald's fall in the big race the first day was due to Wadding pulling

Rattrap round in front of him, refused point blank, until, as he said, 'he knowed wevver it were t' treuth or wevver it worna; and boy goy, young feller,' said he, 'if it is trew as yer troied fer ter knock t' squoire hovver, I shanna gi yer t' gal, bur oi'll gi yer what for or else t' squire'll know, I'll gallantee, and it's 'im as oi shall ex fust toime as a cooms ter Radbreuk.'

Wadding and the fair Phœbe Turner were bothered to death to know what to do for the best, but woman's wit as usual came to the rescue, and she suggested that he should go up to Portland Place, see Reginald, and make a clean breast of it to him.

'I daren't do it,' said Wadding—'he has been too kind to me already; remember, I might have killed him. Thank God I didn't though, and I'd lay down my life to save him to-morrow;' and he meant it too.

'Jack, dear, we shall never get father's consent unless you do go and see the squire,' said Phœbe, 'but if he will only tell father

that he would like us to be married, it won't matter what anyone in the world says. Father thinks a good deal of the Queen, but he thinks a very deal more of the squire.'

'Well, Phœbe, my love, I'll go then,' said Wadding. 'I'll start first train to-morrow morning.'

'Quite right, Jack, and I'll ask Mrs. Pratt, the housekeeper, what time the train leaves Bredford; she knows all about us, and she won't tell father.'

At five o'clock the following morning Wadding jumped into a milk-cart belonging to one of the tenants, reached Bredford in plenty of time to catch the 6.18 train to London, and landed at St. Pancras at 9.45. Twenty minutes saw him at Reginald's town-house in Portland Place, and after at least ten minutes' funking, he at last summoned up sufficient courage to ring the bell. To put it into words, he would far sooner have ridden the shortest shouldered, most uneducated brute in the world at six feet of stiff timber than

face Reginald Miller under the present circumstances. The door was opened by Reginald himself, who was just off to Tattersall's to attend the sale of his own horses. His boots not being sufficiently capacious to permit of his sinking into them, Wadding had to stammer out something that was really incoherent.

'For the life of me I don't know what you want,' said Reginald, 'but if you will jump into the hansom with me we can chat on the way to Tattersall's. Well, what is it?' said he, as the cab turned out of Portland Place. 'I hope you have not come up to London to tell me that you are just about all right again. Though if you have come to tell me, I am sure it is the truth, as you are looking wonderfully well again.'

'No, sir, it isn't that, though I can never thank you for your great kindness, but I want to ask you a great favour.'

'What is it? I will do anything I can for you.'

'Well, sir, the truth is, I want to be married to your head keeper's daughter.'

'What, Phœbe?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, my good fellow, Turner is my keeper certainly, but I have nothing whatever to do with his daughter's matrimonial arrangements.'

'She says that it all depends on you, sir, whether we ever get married or not. I asked Mr. Turner if he would let me marry her, and he said that he had heard it said in the village that I had pulled Rattrap round on purpose to baulk your horse in the Grand National Hunt Race, and if he believes that I did, there is no chance for me as long as he lives. And Phœbe has made me come to London, because she says that if you will be so kind as to say that you would like us to be married, it won't matter what anybody else says.'

'All right, Wadding. I am coming down to Radbrook on Wednesday, as I want to see the three foals that were dropped last week, and I will put in a good word for you.'

'Oh, sir! I can never be grateful enough to you. I quite deserve never to marry Phœbe, but I don't know what I should do if I couldn't marry her.'

'I can quite sympathise with you,' said Reginald, 'and I am sure that it would make all the difference in the world. Now come and look at the horses; they are in the eighteen-stall stable. You will have time to look them through, and then you can go back in my cab, and have dinner with Saunders at Portland Place. I suppose you mean to go back to Radbrook to-night.'

'Yes, sir, I promised Phœbe that I would let her know, but she was quite certain that you would help us. All that she was afraid of was that you might be away.'

After a look through the horses, Wadding went back to Portland Place, dined with the butler, and caught the three o'clock train from St. Pancras to Bredford. He had arranged for a lift back again from the station in the same milk-cart, and on arrival at the top of Silver-

dale Hill, not more than half a mile from the lodge where Turner lived, who should he see walking towards Bredford but Phœbe Turner. Thanking his charioteer for the lift, he dismounted from the cart, and the cart had hardly got round the corner before his arms were round her, and he proceeded to indulge in most unmistakable osculation.

Phœbe, on this occasion at all events was not a sleeping partner, and as soon as she found her tongue after the cessation of hostilities (and a very good sort of hostility too) she said, 'Eh, Jack, you needn't tell me—I know you have seen the squire and he has promised to help us.'

'That he has,' said Wadding; and then he had to tell and retell, word for word, all that passed, and how he was looking, and whether London was really such a big place, and whether it was really much bigger than Bredford.

'And I expect you saw ever such a lot of beautiful ladies, Jack,' said she, with a half-jealous glance at her lover.

'I did that,' says he, 'but ne'er a one half as good-looking as my Phœbe, gal,' and this he emphasised with an encore of the old hostilities.

The author has read in books, or else he has heard somebody say, that as regards this particular kind of engagement, it is invariably a case of 'L'appétit vient en mangeant.' Of course his informants may be wrong, but, as dear old Uncle Remus says, 'I reckon we'll hab ter let it go at dat.'

CHAPTER XI

'MORE MATRIMONY'

On Wednesday, Reginald came down, and after a chat with Turner about the young partridges which were just hatching out, said, 'By the way, Turner, you will be losing Phœbe soon; she has grown into a very fine young woman.'

'Boy goy, squoire, naow that's the curiousest thing as iver oi saad, as yeu should begin fer ter talk about moy gal, fer oi meant fer ter ax yer mysen this very dee. Yer known that theer jockey chap as they say knocked your 'oss over i' the Grand Natural 'Unt race. Well! a 'as axed fer ter wed 'er, beggar 'is legs on 'im, and oi said as I'd be dalled if he should do hanythink er the sort onless oi wur quoite seure as a 'adna done it a purpose.'

'I'm very glad indeed that you have mentioned this to me,' said Reginald, 'and I sincerely hope that you will allow them to make a match of it.'

''Ere Phœbe,' shouted Turner; 'koom 'ere!' Phœbe emerged from the house, blushing crimson. 'You can wed that chap if you've a moind; squoire say as it's aw roight.' Phœbe dropped a low curtsey and disappeared again into the house. 'Yeu'll hexcuse ma, bur oi dew 'ope as yer wunna let the big weddin' hinterfere wi' the shootin'!'

'No,' said Reginald, laughing heartily; 'you may make yourself quite easy on that score. The wedding will be the first week in August, and we shall come back here the first week in September, so as to go to Doncaster for the Leger from here.'

On his way back from the paddocks with Purlby in the evening, Reginald met the newly engaged couple, and congratulated them.

'We owe it all to you, sir,' said Wadding. Phœbe said nothing, but like the Irishman's parrot, she probably thought a deuce of a lot.

The Grand Prix had cleared the way of one of the most dangerous opponents to Fortitude for the Leger, as Tudor, who ran second for the Derby, though he managed to win in the last stride, broke down so badly that all chance of his facing the starter at Doncaster had disappeared. Reginald Miller had had a bad meeting at Ascot, as he got second in the Hunt Cup, second in the Fern Hill, and though his representative ran a dead heat in the St. James's Palace Stakes, he was beaten in the run off. However, he had Lina Lancelot to console him, and besides that, he didn't really much care what happened to the rest of his string as long as Fortitude kept well. Wadding, whose father had a large farm close to Mollerton, where Fortitude was trained, kept Reggie Miller constantly informed as to the horse's well-being.

Mrs. Lancelot and Lina were naturally fully occupied with the cares of trousseaux, and Reggie Miller had great difficulty in persuading them to come down to Hurlingham with him on the days when he played polo there.

Acton, Reggie Miller, and the two ladies formed many a pleasant *partie carrée* at dinner, and Acton, who had accepted the position of best man, had quite come to acquiesce in the inevitable.

At length arrived the wedding day, and a very beautiful day it was; all, as all should, went merry as a marriage bell, and after the knot had been tied and the breakfast was over the newly-wedded pair left for Scotland, where Reggie Miller had a shooting.

CHAPTER XII

THE LEGER

After they had been a fortnight in Scotland, Reggie received one morning a letter from Wadding, in which the writer said that he could not but think that there was something odd about Fortitude's position in the betting market. Here is an extract from his letter:

'The horse does as well as possible, and everybody says that he's the most improved horse they ever saw, and yet he gets no better favourite; the more he is backed the more money there is to lay. I will try to find out all about it; I have an idea, but of course I can't say anything till I am sure.'

This letter set Reggie Miller thinking, and he at once wrote to his trainer, asking him if

he could at all account for the horse being so systematically peppered as he seemed to be. Tryall, the trainer, wrote saying that he could in no way account for it. 'I can only suppose,' he said, 'that they think they know something. All I can tell you is this, that the horse cannot lose the Leger except by some extraordinary accident. I have trained for thirty years, and never have I fancied any horse for any big race as I fancy this horse for the Leger. If you are the least anxious I hope you will come and see him do a gallop.'

On August 28 Reggie Miller and his wife started for Radbrook viâ Mollerton, and Fortitude was put through the mill with the most satisfactory results.

'By the way, Tryall,' said Reggie to his trainer after the gallop, 'I see that they are backing this horse Decimal that we sold last back end.'

'Yes, sir, and if he has mended his ways of course he may beat us; but rogues don't turn honest with age—at least, I have never found them do so.'

'No, nor I; but if the beggar were to take it into his head to go bang into his bridle at the finish he would be a very hard nut to crack.'

'I wonder Wadding didn't come over to Mollerton,' said Reggie Miller to his wife as they drove away after luncheon. 'I made sure that we should find him there.'

On arrival at home that night Reggie found a letter from Wadding, saying that he hoped to be at Radbrook on the following day, and that he had something particular to tell him.

'Well, Wadding,' said Reggie, as Wadding was shown into the smoking-room by the butler, 'how's Phœbe, and when are you two going to get married?'

'I've got something much more important than that, sir, to talk about now,' said Wadding.

'It must be important then indeed,' said Reggie Miller.

'It's about Fortitude, sir, that I want to talk. You know, sir, my brother's head lad

with Fielder, who trains for Fielder and Layitt, the men who bought your horse Decimal last year.'

'Yes,' said Reggie Miller; 'I didn't know it before, but get on.'

'Well, sir, for the last two or three weeks, whenever I have seen him he has always seemed very serious, and especially since Phœbe has been up to stay with father and mother, and he has got to know her, and knows that she is the daughter of the head keeper, and that you are the owner of Fortitude.'

'Well, what does he say?' said Reggie Miller, whose curiosity, to say the least of it, was now fairly roused.

'He says nothing, sir, except that Decimal is very well and can't lose. And the other day, when I told him that you sold the horse because he cut it so many times, he said he would bet all he ever expected to own in the world that Decimal beat Fortitude wherever they finished.'

'What does it mean?'

'I don't know, sir, but I do wish you would see Bowman and have a conversation with him about it.'

'Certainly I will; there is no time to lose. The race is next week, and I have backed this horse to win me more money than a little. But why do you want me to see Bowman?'

'Because he and I are very great friends, and we are neither of us satisfied about this business. We had a talk about it at York the other day. I suppose you have every confidence in Mr. Tryall?'

'Certainly I have,' said Reginald Miller.

'I don't think Bowman has, sir.'

'Don't you? Why?'

'He will tell you all about it, sir, if you ask him; he hasn't told me, but I am sure from what he said that he isn't at all satisfied with the way things are going.'

'I will make a point of seeing Bowman at once,' said Reginald Miller: 'in fact, I will write to him this minute.'

'I should send him a wire, sir, if I were you. He rides at Richmond to-day and to-morrow, and he can easily come here to-morrow night on his way back to London.'

'A capital idea,' said Reginald Miller.

He accordingly telegraphed to Bowman as follows:—'Wish see you particularly. Come here to-morrow evening.' To this telegram he received a reply during the afternoon, saying that Bowman would be with him at nine o'clock the following evening. At the appointed time the following evening Bowman arrived, having driven over from Bredford in a hansom. He was at once shown into the smoking-room, where Reginald Miller was anxiously awaiting him.

'How do you do, Bowman? I am sorry to bring you out of the way, especially so late, but I am most anxious to have a chat with you about the Leger.'

'I am very glad you have sent for me, sir, I assure you,' said Bowman, 'as I too am very anxious; in fact, I don't like the look of things

at all. Have you seen to-day's *Standard*, sir?'

'No, I haven't, but I expect it is much the same as the *Telegraph* as to what it says.'

'Listen to this, sir,' said Bowman, producing from his pocket a copy of the *Standard* of that day. 'Betting at Tattersall's, midnight. There was a great muster at the rooms this evening, most of the leading pencillers being in town, and the Leger day being so close at hand the wagering was very considerable. Fortitude, despite the fact that he has done as well as his admirers could possibly wish ever since he finished fourth in the Derby—in addition to which two of those who finished in front of him have succumbed to the exigencies of training, and the third evidently does not on this occasion carry the unbounded confidence of his owner—did not go as well in the betting as he should. Somebody or somebodies evidently think they know something, as in one quarter at least backers are invariably accommodated.' Bowman stood for some minutes buried

in thought. At last he spoke. 'Mr. Tryall has trained for you ever since you started racing, and has always given you great satisfaction, has he not?'

'That he certainly has.'

'It makes it all the harder, then, for me to tell you what I think.'

'Out with it, Bowman; you either know, or think that you know, something very serious about the horse, or the trainer, or both.'

'Well, sir, I know that he once did sell an owner. I rode the horse too. I was only a young un at the game then, and I didn't understand the signs as well in those days as I should now, but I thought even then that all was not square. I found it all out, though, afterwards.'

'Good gracious, Bowman, this is a very serious charge.'

'I can't help it, sir; it's true.'

'How do you mean?'

'I mean that he stopped Pandemonium for the City and Suburban. You remember, I

daresay, what a hot favourite he was for a whole fortnight before the race. It nearly ruined his owner too.'

'Yes, of course I remember now.'

'That horse was stopped in the stable, sir.'

'The devil he was; and you mean to say that you are not sure that the same game is not being played at this moment.'

'That's it, sir, and I will tell you why. You know Fielder and Layitt, the men who bought Decimal from you last autumn. Well, they train close to, and Fielder's brother trains his horses. He and Tryall, who trains for you, have been in at one or two queer things together I fancy. At all events, Fielder and Layitt are the two bookmakers who never leave off laying Fortitude.'

'What would you do if you were in my place, Bowman?'

'I have been thinking it all over in the train, sir, on my way from Richmond, and I have come to the conclusion that the best thing to do is this. For you to get up on Wednesday

morning, see the horse do his work, go back to the stable with him, and never leave him again until I am on his back and on my way to the post.'

'Certainly I will do so,' said Reginald; 'but Tryall will think it a queerish business, won't he?'

'If Tryall is straight he will only put it down to great anxiety about the horse, and if he is crooked it seems to me that it does not matter the least bit in the world what he thinks.'

'Very well, Bowman, I will do it. Now come and have some supper, and by the time you have finished you ought to be starting for the station again.'

Supper over, and having got behind one of Reginald Miller's big cigars, Bowman got into his hansom and drove back to Bredford.

'We will meet on the course on Wednesday morning, then,' said Reginald, as Bowman drove away.

Wednesday morning dawned, and a lovely autumn morning it was too. Fortitude, with

Bowman up, had a couple of canters, and came in for a lot of admiration; in fact, the touts unhesitatingly pronounced him to be the pick of the basket.

'There,' said Mr. Tryall, as the horse pulled up after his canter, 'you will come sound to the post at all events.'

Reginald Miller had taken the precaution to put some sandwiches in his pocket, also a flask, and on the way from the town moor to the stables he indulged in a glass of rum and milk.

'Now, sir, said Mr. Tryall, after the horse's toilet had been completed, if you've no objection I will lock him up now, and leave him quiet till it is time for him to start for the course this afternoon.'

'Now look here, Tryall, I am so intensely anxious about this race that I don't mean to leave the horse till Bowman gets on his back.' Tryall's face alone was enough to make Reginald feel quite sure that what he proposed to do was absolutely necessary.

'Do you doubt me, sir?' stammered Tryall; and though he strove hard to affect injured

innocence, still his anxiety and trepidation were far too apparent to leave room for the slightest doubt as to the truth of Bowman's suspicions.

'Surely you can have no objection to my remaining with my own horse. It is a hobby of mine.'

'A hobby that will probably lose you the race, sir. He will fret and not touch his feed. He is a very queer horse in that way, and he will not touch a mouthful if anybody is looking on, or is, in fact, anywhere near him. Besides, he is wound right up to concert pitch, and a little thing upsets a horse when he is trained to the minute as this horse is; in fact, he is looking very tucked up as it is this morning.'

'Considering the poor beggar has probably had hardly a mouthful since this time yesterday, I am not surprised,' thought Reginald Miller, but though he thought it, he of course did not say it, as he was anxious if possible to arrange things quietly. What he did say was this:

'Well, I can't help it, Tryall; I have made up my mind not to leave the horse till he starts

for the Leger. Besides, I will stop in the next box, and I am quite sure that won't prevent his feeding.'

'Either you trust the horse entirely to me, sir, or I wash my hands of the whole concern.'

This Tryall said, feeling perfectly certain that Reginald Miller, who had hitherto implicitly trusted him, would most certainly cede his point. Great, then, was his astonishment when he received as his answer the following: 'All right; your very anxiety for my departure only makes me the more determined to stay. There is something wrong somewhere, or the horse would be a very much better favourite, and I am determined that I will leave no stone unturned to insure his success.'

Tryall was fairly dumbfounded for a moment, and when he did find his tongue he took refuge in the most frightful abuse and vituperation. He was a passionate man, and lost his temper completely.

'Come,' said Reginald Miller 'out you go. Make out your account at once, and understand that henceforth you are no longer trainer

of mine. Do you mean to go quietly, or must I kick you out?'

Tryall saw that unless he took his departure the action would be suited to the word. He accordingly went off, muttering, and vowing vengeance. Reginald Miller then beckoned to the boy, who had been hovering in the distance, and told him to bring the horse's food and water. There was no doubt about it. Tryall's game was to 'stop the horse in the stable,' as it is called, by keeping him on terribly short commons, and now that the poor brute was absolutely ravenous, to let him gorge himself with both food, water, and bedding till he couldn't beat a donkey. After a few minutes' confab with Bowman it was decided, as there were more than eight hours to the race, to give him a bucket of water and a full feed now, and later on another very light feed and a few swallows of water. Meanwhile the discomfited Mr. Tryall at once proceeded to the quarters of Messrs. Fielder and Layitt, and his first words

to them pretty well explained the game that was intended to be played.

'Somebody's rounded,' said he, as he entered the sitting-room where the two worthies were poring over their books.

'The devil!' said they, simultaneously springing up from their seats.

'They have, though; at all events the owner, whom I always thought I could twist round my little finger, has turned rusty and swears he won't leave the box till the horse starts for the course. I have kept him very short ever since yesterday morning, and in a very short time from now he would have been stuffed like a bolster.'

'But who can have rounded? Nobody knew but ourselves.'

'Well, I always told you that you were both taking much too great liberties with the horse. It was bound to set people talking, and I believe it is Bowman that has put him up to it.'

'Oh dear, oh dear,' said Layitt; 'this is awful.'

'But if Decimal only runs up to his trials he cannot lose,' said his *confrère*.

'Ah!' said Tryall, 'if the horse had only run up to his trials, do you think that you two would ever have owned a hair in his tail? Why, he could always give Fortitude 7 lbs. at home, and in public the other horse could lose him.'

'But he has completely altered now; didn't we try him with seven others in the gallop, and colours up and everything to make a race of it, and didn't he carry 10 lbs. more than any of the lads knew anything about?'

'Yes, I know all that, but then he was at home, and he knew it; at all events, I mean to get out all I can—in fact, I shall back Fortitude for every bit that I can get on, and I strongly recommend you to do the same.'

The result of this conversation was that by the time the numbers went up for the first race Fortitude had come with a rattle to 6 to 4, and as the afternoon wore on he became a better and better favourite, until at the fall of the flag 5 to 4 on was the best procurable price. As to the race itself, it needs little or no descrip-

tion. At the Red House two only were in it—Fortitude and Decimal—and at the distance Decimal really looked like beating his quondam stable companion, at whom Bowman was niggling a bit; fifty yards farther on he sat down to ride in earnest. The very first crack of the whip had its effect on both horses, Fortitude answering like the game un that he was, and Decimal beginning to stick his toes in and refusing to try a yard for the rest of the journey. Fortitude won very comfortably indeed, a rank outsider getting up in the last stride and wresting second place from Decimal by the shortest head. The win was immensely popular with the public, who had backed the horse steadily since the breakdown of Tudor in the Grand Prix, in addition to which it had leaked out that there had been a serious split in the camp within a very few hours of the race. Reginald Miller won a very large stake; Bowman added another to his already long list of victories, and was, it is needless to say, amply remunerated.

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